The Fragrant Flower Blooms With Dignity
Vol 19

Pre release cover

S-SORRY, RINTARO-KUN...

THIS IS ALL BECAUSE OF MOM BEING SO PUSHY...!

N-NO, IT'S FINE!

IN FACT, I SHOULD APOLOGIZE! YOU COULD REALLY USE THIS TIME TO STUDY...

THIS IS...

...SO AWKWARD!

Chapter 142: Visiting Kaoruko's Room

トポポ
GLUB

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU, MOM!

THE LIVING ROOM WOULD'VE WORKED JUST FINE, TOO!
JUST...
I MEAN, WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO SIT DOWN AND ENJOY THE CAKE HE BROUGHT?

YOU COULD HEAD UP TO KAORUKO'S ROOM, YES?

YOU MUST BE A BIT EXHAUSTED WALKING AROUND IN THIS HEAT, RIGHT? WHY DON'T YOU COME IN FOR A LITTLE WHILE?

?!

YOU'RE ALWAYS KEEPING IT CLEAN, SO IT SHOULDN'T BE MUCH OF AN ISSUE, NO?

THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM HERE!

WHY DID YOU SUGGEST MY ROOM OF ALL PLACES?!

WHAT? N-NO... I MEAN, WE BOTH HAVE OUR ENTRANCE EXAMS TO WORRY ABOUT...

THAT'S WHY THE PLAN WAS FOR HIM TO JUST DROP BY TO GIVE ME MY BIRTHDAY CAKE AS A PRESENT AND HEAD HOME...

HAVE YOU TWO EVEN BEEN ABLE TO MEET UP AT ALL THESE DAYS?

...

I KNOW HOW HARD YOU'RE WORKING EVERY SINGLE DAY.

POINT

YOU'RE NOT RISKING ANYTHING BY TAKING A DAY OFF, NO?

コトン TOK

BUT HE'S HERE ALREADY, SO WHY NOT USE THIS CHANCE AT LEAST A LITTLE?

YOU'RE NOT WRONG, BUT... NGH...!

うぅ... MURMUR

IN FACT, TAKING SOME TIME OFF TO TALK WITH HIM...

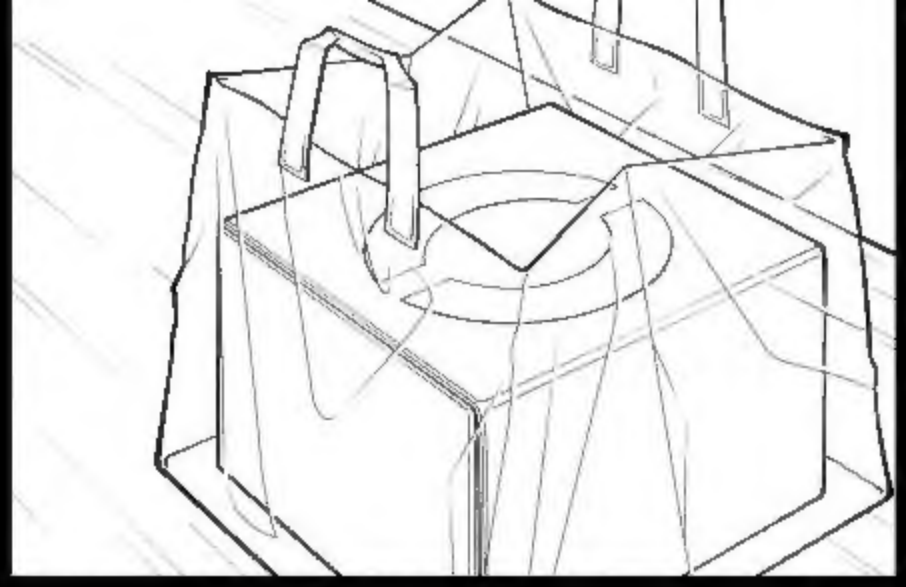
...MIGHT JUST REFILL YOUR ENERGY SO THAT YOU CAN KEEP AT IT AGAIN TOMORROW, RIGHT?

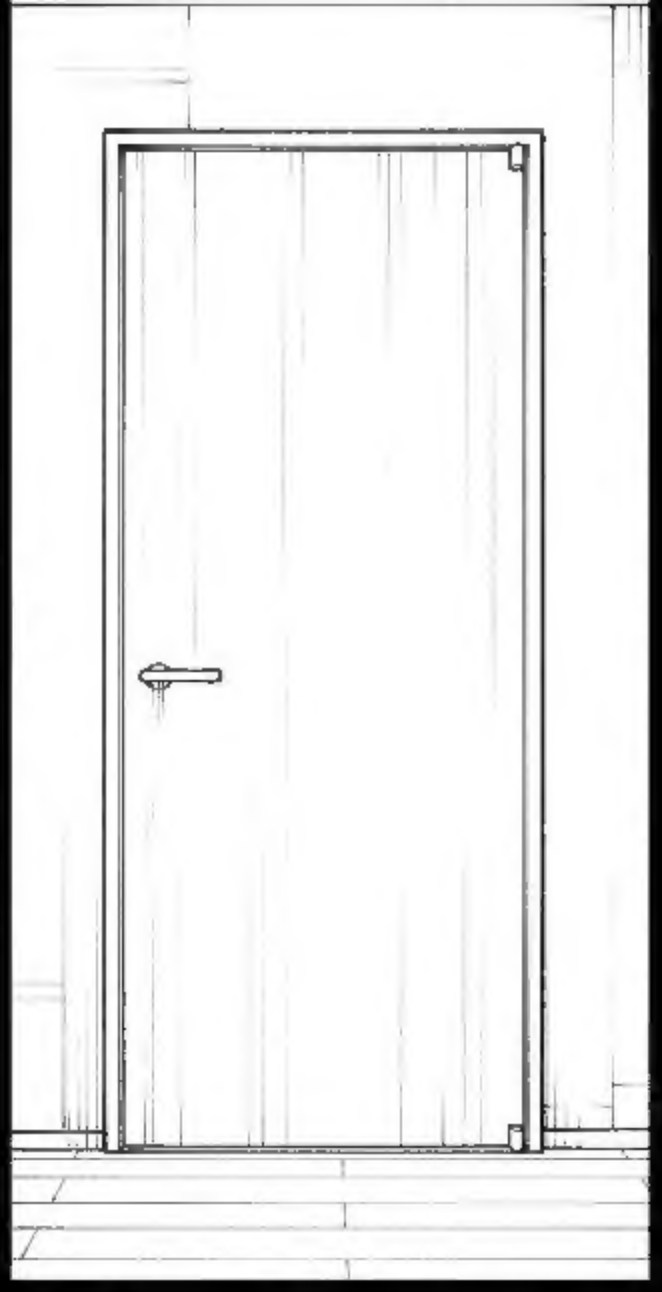
NOT TO FORGET THAT TODAY IS YOUR SPECIAL DAY, MY PRECIOUS...

...BIRTHDAY GIRL.

JUST GIVE ME A MOMENT, I'LL PREPARE SOME PLATES FOR YOU.

...OKAY.





I...
V^...
CLENCH

I THINK MY HEART'S ABOUT TO POP...!

SHE TOLD ME TO WAIT HERE SO THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING, BUT...

Sorry about this! Just give me a few!

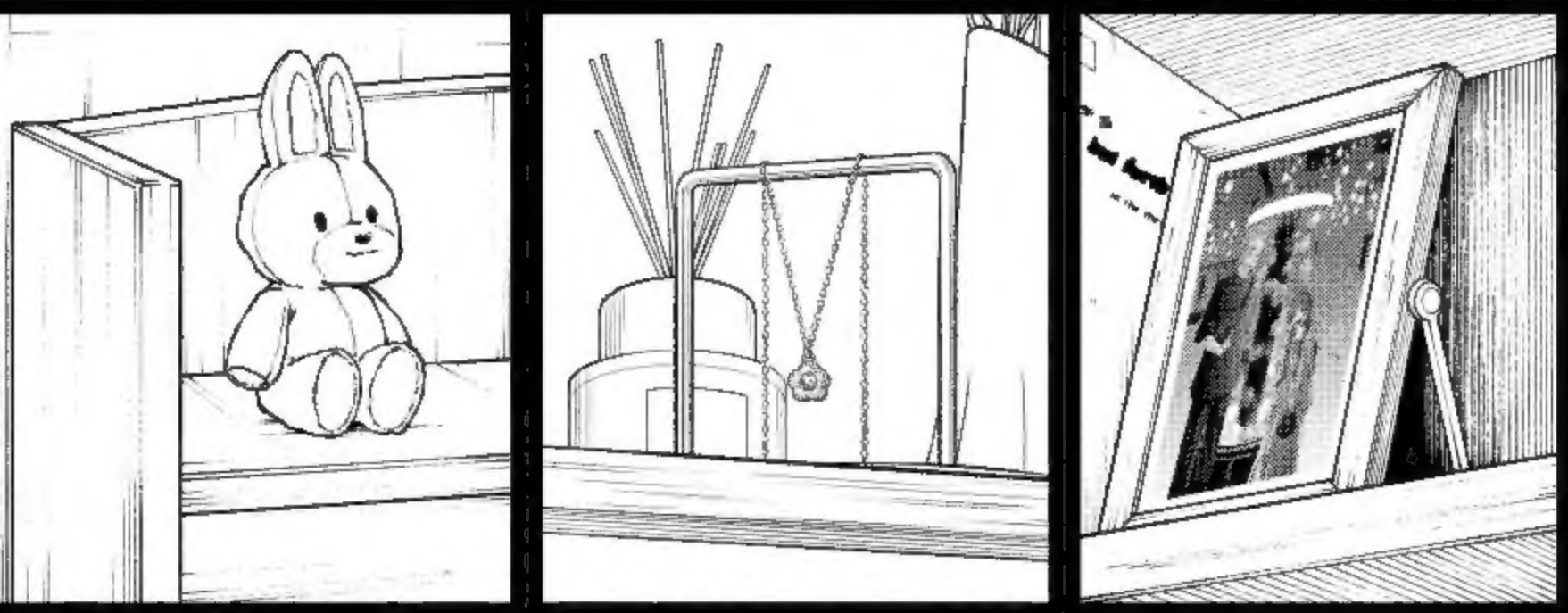
S- Sure!

WHAT... DO I EVEN DO NOW?

GLANCE

STARING AT ALL THE STUFF IN HER ROOM DOESN'T FEEL... VERY APPRO-PRIATE.

Like I'm doing something I shouldn't be...



OH, SHE'S KEEPING ALL THIS STUFF ON DISPLAY...

Even the stuff we got back at the aquarium and the summer festival...

AND OF COURSE THEY WALKED IN ON ME STARING AT ALL HER STUFF...!

N-NO PRO-BLEM!

KCHAK

SORRY FOR THE WAIT, RINTARO-KUN!

I FEEL LIKE...

I HAVEN'T FELT THIS NERVOUS FOR THE LONGEST TIME NOW...

ZRRK

TIME TO TRY A SLICE OF THE—

A-ANY-WAY!

THAT SAID, I REALLY SHOULDN'T STAY HERE TOO LONG, SO...

WE WILL BE RIGHT BACK.

M-MY LEGS... FELL ASLEEP...!

WH-WHAT HAPPENED?!

GU-HAA-AAH!

O-OH! ARE YOU OKAY? MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, IT'S FINE!

...SORRY FOR CAUSING SUCH A SCENE.

IS IT BETTER NOW...?

I'M SO DAMN LAME...!

TEHE, I COULDN'T HELP MY-SELF.

P-PLEASE DON'T LAUGH AT ME.

HE HE HE...

...PFFT.

...

WHAT?! NO, OF COURSE NOT!

I FIGURED A CAKE MIGHT BE A BIT BORING FOR A BIRTHDAY PRESENT, SO...

RUMMAGE

SO, KAORUKO-SAN...

YEAH?

I WONDER WHAT IT COULD BE... OH!

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

A-ARE YOU SURE? YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE!

HERE.

A PROPER BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

I FIGURED THAT YOU MIGHT FEEL EXHAUSTED AFTER ALL THAT STUDYING, SO A RELAXING BATH COULD DO THE TRICK AND HELP YOU RELAX EVEN WHEN YOU'RE JUST STUCK IN YOUR ROOM ALL DAY.

OH MY GOSH! THAT'S SO THOUGHTFUL OF YOU!

ARE THESE... BATH BOMBS?!

So cute!

YOU WERE LOST ON WHAT TO GIVE HER AS A BIRTHDAY PRESENT, SO YOU CAME TO RELY ON YOUR BIG BRO? YOU'RE JUST THE CUTEST GUY AROUND!

That's it?!

...

I'M SO GLAD I SWALLOWED MY PRIDE AND ASKED MY BROTHER FOR ADVICE...!

Ha ha ha!

THAT'S TRUE!

BUT THE COLOR OF THESE LOCKS GREAT! I'LL MAKE SURE TO USE ONE TONIGHT!

I had no [illegible] honest

THERE'S... SOME CRAZY VARIETY WHEN IT COMES TO THEM, HUH?

YOU'RE VERY WEL-COME.

THANK YOU SO MUCH, RINTARO-KUN!

KAO-RUKO-SAN.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY...

He got most of the cake you made last year, you know.

THIS TIME, I'M NOT LETTING KOSUKE EAT ANY MORE THAN ME!

SIX!

YOU'RE GOING TO EAT THE REST WITH YOUR FAMILY LATER, RIGHT? HOW MANY SLICES DO I MAKE IT?

Yeah? Thanks.

SNAP

SNAP

OH, IT LOOKS SO GOOD! YOU ALWAYS MANAGE TO MAKE EACH ONE SO APPEALING, I SWEAR!

OH, SERIOUSLY? THAT'S AWESOME!

RIGHT?

YEAH! HE WENT TO THE CLUB PRACTICE. APPARENTLY, HE'S IN THE STARTING LINEUP!

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, IS HE OUT RIGHT NOW?

...

YAY! THANKS! TIME TO HAVE A BITE...

ALL RIGHT, HERE YOU GO.

MHM, SO DELICIOUS!

...!

PHEW

IF...

...!

SOME EXTRA SUGAR SHOULD GIVE YOU THE NECESSARY PUSH TO KEEP STUDYING LATER, RIGHT?

Kinda different from usual

AND IT TASTES A LOT SWEETER THIS TIME AROUND!

YEAH, I WAS TINKERING WITH IT A LITTLE.

IT DEFINITELY WILL.

...YEAH.

OH, RIGHT!

KOFF

WHY DID YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH TSUMUGI-KUN?

HE ALWAYS LOOKS OUT FOR ME...

AH, THAT?

HM...?!

HOW ARE THINGS WITH NATSUSAWA-KUN? IS HE ACTING DIFFERENT FROM USUAL AT SCHOOL?

Especially since the two of them were with us.

WE COULDN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, RIGHT?

I SEE...

AND SO WE DECIDED NOT TO BRING IT UP BEFORE HE WOULD.

WELL... TO BE HONEST, HE WAS ACTING THE SAME WAY AS ALWAYS.

FIG-URES...

I THINK YORITA-KUN PROBABLY SAW THROUGH IT, TOO.

PRETTY MUCH. MADOKA AND I PICKED UP ON IT.

SO THAT MEANS YOU ALSO... REALIZED?

YEAH, TRUE.

AT THIS POINT, SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW SHE FEELS ABOUT NATSUSAWA-KUN YET.

YEAH, THAT'S THE THING...

WITH HOSHINA-SAN, SPECIFICALLY.

IF ANYTHING, I WAS CURIOUS HOW THINGS WERE ON YOUR END.

I THINK SHE REALIZED THAT HE'S SOMEONE IN A MUCH MORE SPECIAL POSITION COMPARED TO YOU AND THE OTHERS.

... IS DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER BOYS.

NATSU-SAWA-KUN'S PLACE IN MY HEART..

BUT...

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT... WELL, THAT ALL DEPENDS ON SUBARU.

THAT'S PRO-BABLY RIGHT, YEAH.

IF IT'S THE ANSWER SHE'S REACHED, THEN I'LL RESPECT IT.

WHETHER SHE KEEPS SEEING HIM AS JUST A FRIEND OR EVENTUALLY COMES TO FALL IN LOVE WITH HIM...

TAK-

HEY, RINTARO-KUN...?

...

AT THE END OF AUGUST...

THERE'S A SUMMER FESTIVAL HAPPENING. CAN WE... GO THERE ON A DATE?

THERE'S ALSO SUMMER EXTRA CLASSES AT THE PREP SCHOOL SUBARU INVITED ME TO...

SO DOING SOMETHING ON THE EXACT DAY MIGHT BE DIFFICULT, BUT...

HUH? BUT...

I KNOW THAT WE'RE BOTH INCREDIBLY BUSY RIGHT NOW...

IF I CAN LOOK FORWARD TO THE FESTIVAL...

I THINK I CAN GIVE IT MY ALL FOR THE REST OF THE SUMMER BREAK, SO...

NEXT MONTH...

WE'LL HAVE BEEN DATING FOR A WHOLE YEAR, RIGHT?

THEN I WON'T HESITATE TO DO SO WHATEVER IT TAKES.

SO...

IF I CAN HELP EASE YOUR BURDEN IN ANY WAY.

...MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

I LOVE SEEING YOUR CHEERFUL SMILE

...AS YOUR BOYFRIEND

BECAUSE THAT'S MY JOB...

WOULD THAT BE... TOO MUCH TO ASK?

NOPE.

NOT AT ALL.

!

I'D LOVE TO TAKE YOU OUT...

TO THE SUMMER FESTIVAL.

...IS GONNA KEEP ME MOTIVATED AS WELL!

AND HAVING THAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

THAT'S GREAT!

YEAH?

UM, RINTARO-KUN!

I THINK... I SHOULD PROBABLY HEAD HOME NOW.

ARE YOU SURE? THANKS.

AH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! I CAN CLEAN UP THE REST LATER!

...YEAH.

HUG ME!

P-PLEASE...

...!

BLINK
ぱち

TEE HEE...

WILL DO.

BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME, OKAY?

THANKS FOR HAVING ME!

K- KEEP AT IT WITH YOUR STUDIES, YEAH?

Ah... Yeah...

...

S- SEE YOU, RINTARO-KUN!

And thanks again for the present!

ZRT

ZRT

...WAS ON THE FIRST FLOOR, AND YET WE...

HER MOTH-ER...

I FEEL LIKE...

WE WERE DOING SOMETHING NAUGHTY...

IT'S SIZZLING OUTSIDE, SO BE CAREFUL, OKAY?

SURE!

THANKS FOR TODAY, EVERY-ONE!

I'VE GOTTA STEP OUT, SO HANDLE THE FRONT FOR ME!

Patisse

Plain

YOU READY?

YOU GOT IT!

THEN WE'RE OFF!

Chapter 143: Parent-Teacher Meeting

ALL RIGHT!

s 3-1 Parent-Teacher Meeting Sch

re glad to see that all of you are do ng just fine despite the summe
at, and we thank you for understand ng and cooperation w th our pa
or this meet ng. Based on your feedback from our last parent-teacher
we've created a schedule that should hopefully accomodat
check below for more information, and remem

3-1

THANK YOU FOR COMING! LET'S GET STARTED, SHALL WE?

OF COURSE! THANK YOU FOR HAVING US.

I'M HIS HOMEROOM TEACHER TSUKADA.

AS IT TURNS OUT, I'VE BEEN LOOKING AFTER HIM SINCE HIS FIRST YEAR WITH US.

THAT'S TRUE! HE HAS TOLD ME STORIES FROM TIME TO TIME, TOO.

HE HOLDS YOU IN HIGH REGARD, I HEAR!

M-MOM! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY THAT...

Ha ha ha!

I'm glad you haven't changed a bit, Sensei!

TELLING YOU LIKE THIS WOULD MAKE IT LOSE ALL OF ITS CHARM, SO I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO PASS.

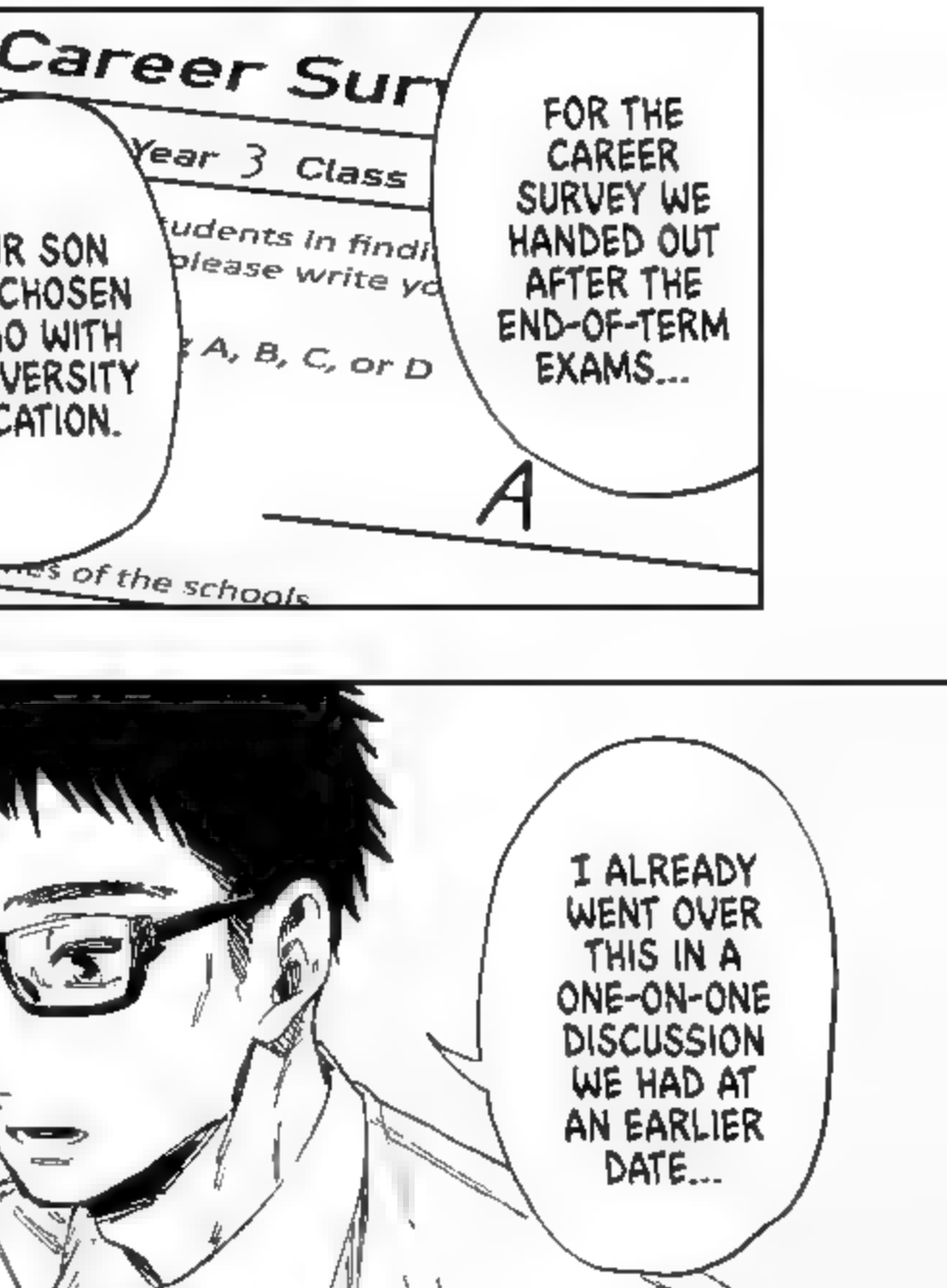
MIND GIVING ME AN EXAMPLE OR TWO? I NEED DETAILS.

REALLY NOW?

NOW THEN...

RAP

FIRST, LET'S DISCUSS THIS RIGHT HERE.



2nd Career Sur

This survey is used by the scho
(*This survey doesn't equal a f
business you have in mind)

Year 3 Class

udents in findi
please write yo

Survey Please choose amo

A	Tertiary Education	B	Fr
C	Civil Servant	D	Un D

A, B, C, or D

If you selected A, please write down the
School Name
t choice

YOUR SON HAS CHOSEN TO GO WITH A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.

FOR THE CAREER SURVEY WE HANDED OUT AFTER THE END-OF-TERM EXAMS...

A

...BUT IT APPEARS THAT HE'D LIKE TO BECOME A PÂTISSIER IN THE FUTURE, YES?

I ALREADY WENT OVER THIS IN A ONE-ON-ONE DISCUSSION WE HAD AT AN EARLIER DATE...

MY HUSBAND IS ALSO OF THE OPINION THAT HE SHOULDN'T BE CONFINED TO MERELY OUR OWN STORE, AND THAT HE SHOULD GATHER EXPERIENCE AT ALL SORTS OF PLACES.

I SEE.

THAT'S RIGHT.

AND THAT HE WILL NOT BE WORKING AT THE BAKERY YOUR FAMILY OWNS IS STILL THE CASE?

WHICH MEANS WE SHOULD BE DISCUSSING YOUR CHOICE OF CULINARY ARTS SCHOOLS NEXT...

	Undecided / Decided
If you selected **A**, please write down the names of the schools.	
School Name	**Faculty/Depart**
Arihira Technical Culinary Arts School	Pâtiss
Le Coeur Confectionary School	Confectionary
Fukuume Culinary Arts School	Confectionary
B, please write down the names of the companies/	
Name of C	

...

SO...

DOES THAT SOUND OKAY WITH YOU, TSUMUGI?

TSUMUGI?

IT'S TIME FOR HIS PARENT-TEACHER MEETING? MAN, THAT TAKES ME BACK!

...

THE TWO OF US CHATTED A LITTLE WHILE AGO, RIGHT.

HE TOLD ME THAT HE WENT TO AN OPEN CAMPUS DAY AT ONE OF THE SCHOOLS HE'S SET HIS EYES ON RIGHT AFTER HIS SUMMER BREAK STARTED.

I MEAN, HE'S ALREADY IN HIS THIRD YEAR.

I FEEL LIKE IT'S BEEN A LIFETIME FOR ME!

BUT, I WAS WONDER-ING...

I MADE SURE TO TELL HIM MY ALMA MATER!

...

WASN'T IT JUST THE OTHER DAY WHEN WE GAVE HIM SOME ADVICE OUR-SELVES?

THAT'S PRETTY IMPRES-SIVE.

IS THERE REALLY ANY NEED FOR HIM TO GO TO A SPECIALIST SCHOOL?

Granted, I did graduate from one myself, so I'm one to talk.

ACTUALLY, YOU'VE GOT A POINT THERE.

Currently handling the cash register...

I wonder what they're talking about...

EVEN IF HE'S STRUGGLING TO FIND HIS OWN PATH...

TSUMUGI-SAN IS LETTING HIM HANDLE A LOT HERE, HUH?

HONESTLY, IT SURE LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOTTEN PLENTY OF TRAINING TO ME.

PLUS, HE'S ALREADY WORKING ON HIS OWN DESIGNS, TOO.

I SEE...

...BECAUSE OF THIS UNNATURAL ENVIRONMENT HE STARTED OUT WITH...

THAT'S JUST SOMETHING HE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH.

BECAUSE MY FAMILY OWNS A BAKERY.

I SIMPLY GOT A BIT OF A HEAD-START...

OR THAT I THINK I CAN DO EVERYTHING JUST FINE WITHOUT LEARNING ANYTHING ELSE.

IT'S NOT THAT I ALREADY KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS ABOUT THIS.

OR EVEN GOING OVERSEAS FOR SPECIAL TRAINING.

AND TO BE FAIR, I AM INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBLE CURRICULUM AT THESE SCHOOLS...

BY FOLLOWING THE PROPER PATH LIKE THIS.

THERE MUST BE MANY THINGS I CAN ONLY LEARN...

SOMETHING JUST DOESN'T QUITE FEEL... RIGHT? OR VERY CLEAR...

AT LEAST FOR RIGHT NOW...

BUT...

IF GOING WITH THE FLOW WHILE I FEEL LIKE THIS... IS THE RIGHT DECISION.

AND... I'M NOT SURE...

IF POSSI-BLE...

I WANT TO SEE ALL THE POSSIBLE CHOICES I HAVE RIGHT NOW.

SO THAT... I DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS LATER.

WHAT I SHOULD CHOOSE NEXT AFTER GRADUATING.

I STILL DON'T KNOW...

BOW

AND SO... I'M SORRY...

IT BLUNT 3,
THAT'S FINE.
MULL IT OVER AS HARD AS YOU NEED!
...!
I DO THINK THAT WHAT'S CAUSING YOU TO HESITATE MIGHT BE A CRUCIAL PIECE TO THE PUZZLE AS WELL.
AND YES, YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD TO FIND YOUR ANSWER, BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE AN ANSWER READY TOMORROW.
JUST USE THIS SUMMER BREAK TO FULLY GET RID OF ANY FINAL DOUBTS YOU MAY HAVE.
AND TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...

...HAS ME A BIT RELIEVED AS WELL.

HEARING ABOUT YOUR DETERMINATION AND STRUGGLE JUST NOW...

...

THIS IS SOMETHING I ONLY PERCEIVED VAGUELY, HOWEVER...

WHAT...?

AND EVEN IN THE RARE INSTANCE THAT YOU DID... YOU ALWAYS PUT THE OTHERS FIRST.

...BUT UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, YOU DIDN'T INVOLVE YOURSELF WITH OTHERS.

EVEN GOING SO BACK AS YOUR FIRST YEAR HERE...

YOU WOULD PROPERLY LOOK AT YOUR SURROUNDINGS, YES...

!

IT WAS AS IF... YOU WERE NEVER REALLY MUCH ATTACHED TO YOUR OWN FEELINGS.

IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WERE GOING WITH A DISTANCED STANCE LIKE THAT

"AS LONG AS I CAN PROTECT WHAT MATTERS TO ME, I CAN HANDLE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER."

IT APPEARED AS IF YOU'D STARTED...

MOVING INTO A BETTER DIRECTION... SLOWLY BUT SURELY

AFTER MOVING UP A YEAR...

AND I GENUINELY FEEL THIS WAY...

THAT SAID...

...!

AM I RIGHT?

IF I HAD TO GUESS, SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED FOR YOU TO CHANGE YOUR APPROACH...

...THAT'S RIGHT.

I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE RINTARO-KUN.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.

I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER, REALLY.

FINDING SOMETHING THAT YOU WANT TO DO... AND FIGHTING DISCOMFORT THAT'S PLAGUING YOU ABOUT YOUR DECISION...

NOT IGNORING YOUR OWN FEELINGS...

SEEING YOU LIKE THIS...

BEING ABLE TO SEE THE GROWTH OF MY OWN STUDENTS...

...IS QUITE POSSIBLY MY GREATEST MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE WORKING AS A TEACHER!

Ha ha ha!

AS I SAID EARLIER...

WHEN SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU, THINK ABOUT IT UNTIL YOU FIND THE ANSWER!

NO, IT'S PERFECTLY FINE!

AH, PLEASE EXCUSE ME! I DIDN'T MEAN TO RAMBLE ON LIKE THIS!

HEY, RINTARO?

...

ISN'T THERE ANYTHING YOU SHOULD BE SAYING TO YOUR TEACHER?

HE HASN'T CAUSED ANY TROUBLE OTHER THAN VIOLATING THE SCHOOL REGULATIONS...

WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE A PROPER TALK WITH HIM BY ANY CHANCE?

OVER AND OVER, I'VE BEEN TOLD...

THIS SORT OF LOGICAL REASONING.

BUT EVEN THAT HAS BECOME SOMETHING WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IGNORE MUCH LONGER...

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY...

BUT THE ONLY THING I WAS ALLOWED TO DO...

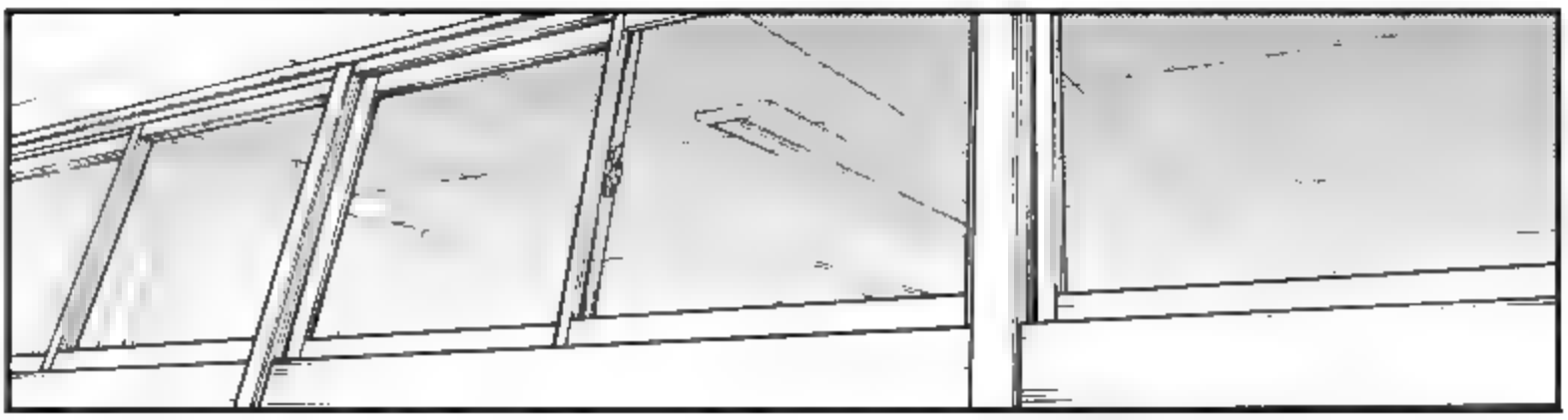
WAS TO BOW MY HEAD AND APOLOGIZE.

TSUKADA-SENSEI...

...UNTIL HIS GRADUATION.

PLEASE LOOK AFTER MY SON...

AND THAT I WILL.



ZIP IT.
I guess that shows how close you are.
COLOR ME SURPRISED. YOU LEARNED HOW TO BE FEISTY WITH ADULTS OTHER THAN YOUR PARENTS, HUH?

...

...RINTARO.

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU...

I KEEP DRAGGING OUT MY DECISION LIKE THIS.

MOM... I'M SORRY.

Listen to your teacher, dangit!

YOU GOTTA USE THIS TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, WHILE YOU STILL CAN!

'SCUSE ME? DID YOU FORGET WHAT YOU WERE JUST TOLD FIVE MINUTES AGO?!

THE WAY I SEE IT...

ANY OF THIS IS FAR BETTER THAN YOU REGRETTING YOUR CHOICE IN THE FUTURE!

...!

THANKS.

...

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

...

...OUR FINAL PARENT-TEACHER MEETING, HUH?

...THIS HAS PROBABLY BEEN...

FOR THE BOTH OF US...

...I'M NOT GOING TO BE MUCH MORE INVOLVED WITH HIS LIFE FROM NOW ON.

THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE...

EVEN JUST LOOKING AT HIS FACE...

...AS HE WALKS NEXT TO ME...

IT'S GETTING HARDER DAY BY DAY.

DON'T GIVE UP!

KEEP ON TRYING.

MAKE ME PROUD...

RINTARO!

YOU COULD'VE GONE TO THE RESTROOM AT ANY POINT WHILE WE WERE STILL INSIDE.

GEEZ, MOM...

IT'S SO HOT...

GOOD THING I FOUND THIS PLACE WITH SOME SHADE...

IF POSSI-BLE...

I WANT TO SEE ALL THE POSSIBLE CHOICES I HAVE RIGHT NOW.

SOMETHING JUST DOESN'T QUITE FEEL... RIGHT? OR VERY CLEAR.

AT LEAST FOR RIGHT NOW

BUT.

IF GOING WITH THE FLOW WHILE I FEEL LIKE THIS... IS THE RIGHT DECISION.

AND.. I'M NOT SURE.

TOK

TOK

WHAT TO DO...

Chapter 144: Rintaro's Summer Break

SORRY FOR THE WAIT, RINTARO!

OH, NO WORRIES.

MAYBE SHE WORKS THERE...?

SHE'S HEADED TO KIKYO...

Man, I'm boiling out here!

...

HOW DISTASTE-FUL...

OH? TOKI-SENSEI?

I'M SURPRISED TO SEE YOU TODAY.

DIDN'T YOU HAVE A TRAINING COURSE TODAY? WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

Thank you for your hard work, Kimura-sensei

I STILL HAVE TO PREPARE THE LAST BIT FOR MY SUMMER SUPPLEMENTARY CLASSES.

THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS HAVE QUITE THE SCHEDULE, DON'T THEY?

BY THE WAY, HOW WAS THE COURSE?

OH, IT WAS A VERY FULFILLING TIME, INDEED.

THAT SAID, MUCH OF MY CONTENT-MENT WAS RUINED...

TAK

TAK

...BY SOMETHING I SAW IN FRONT OF OUR GATE JUST NOW.

AHHH...

COULD YOU BE REFERRING TO ONE OF CHIDORI'S STUDENTS?

SHOWING NOT EVEN A GLIMMER OF CHARACTER.

DECIDING NOW IS FRONT OF THE SCHOOL GATE

IS POISON TO OUR STUDENTS.

WILL YOU BE GOING AGAIN THIS YEAR?

YUI

OF COURSE...

...I WILL.

SAY WHAT?!

KAO-CHAN WANTS TO BE... AN OBSTE-TRICIAN-GYNECOLO-GIST?!

YUP.

AHHH, NO WONDER!

SLUUUP

THAT'S WHY SHE'S STUDYING LIKE HER LIFE DEPENDS ON IT RIGHT NOW.

I genuinely don't know what to say.

THAT'S... REALLY IMPRESSIVE!

I FIGURED IT'D BE BEST TO LET HER FOCUS ON HER STUDIES...

HUH? I MEAN...

ARE YOU... NOT TALKING TO HER MUCH THESE DAYS?

...

OH, NOOO REASON? I WAS JUST WONDERING WHAT WAS UP SINCE IT'S BEEN QUIET ON HER FRONT FOR A WHILE NOW.

Ho ho ho!

...WHY THE QUESTION?

WHEN YOU'RE PREPARING FOR ENTRANCE EXAMS, STUDYING IS THE ONE THING ON YOUR MIND. IT'LL BE TOUGH TO FIGURE OUT JUST HOW MUCH DISTANCE YOU SHOULD KEEP FOR HER SAKE.

I MEAN, I TOTALLY GET IT!

...

AT LEAST GIVE HER A CALL HERE AND THERE, YEAH?

THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'LL SUFFER DIVINE PUNISHMENT JUST FOR TAKING IT EASY A LITTLE.

THAT SAID...

AND KNOWING OUR ADORABLE KAO-CHAN...

I BET SHE'D BE HAPPY.

CHUCKLE けら CHUCKLE けら

AH, HOW NICE IT IS TO BE YOUNG AND WORRY ABOUT THESE THINGS!

Hehe!

SLURRP

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.

...

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU FIND OUT WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU BEFORE YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION.

BUT FOR NOW...

IF POSSI-BLE...

I WANT TO SEE ALL THE POSSIBLE CHOICES I HAVE RIGHT NOW.

SOMETHING JUST DOESN'T QUITE FEEL RIGHT? OR VERY CLEAR...

AT LEAST FOR RIGHT NOW.

BUT..

IF GOING WITH THE FLOW WHILE I FEEL LIKE THIS IS THE RIGHT DECISION.

AND, I'M NOT SURE

...YEAH.

OH?

TAM

TAM

TAM

I'm pretty tired, too...

MIGHT AS WELL HIT THE HAY EARLY TODAY...

YAAAWN

YEAH...

DID YOU SPEND ALL DAY IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN?

WELCOME BACK, HONEY.

BUT BUSINESS IS PRETTY CALM THESE DAYS, SO CAN'T YOU TAKE IT EASY?
My eyes...
I WANT TO USE THIS FREE TIME TO COME UP WITH SOME NEW RECIPES.
Need something to drink...
YOU'RE SUCH A WORKA-HOLIC, GEEZ...
...
HOW DID THE PARENT-TEACHER MEETING GO?
MHM... HE'S STILL NOT 100% SURE ABOUT EVERY-THING...
BUT HIS HOMEROOM TEACHER IS A GREAT PERSON, AND I THINK HE MANAGED TO PUSH RINTARO IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
THAT'S GREAT TO HEAR.
...
IT WAS AS IF... YOU WERE NEVER REALLY MUCH ATTACHED TO YOUR OWN FEELINGS.
IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WERE GOING WITH A DISTANCED STANCE LIKE THAT.
PLEASE LOOK AFTER MY SON...
...UNTIL HIS GRADUATION.

...

!

GTAK

WAH?! THAT SURPRISED ME...

WHAT'S UP?

...

...IT'S NOTHING.

WHY DID YOU SUDDENLY DYE YOUR HAIR BLONDE AND ASK ME ABOUT PIERCED EARS...?

I WON'T CRY, NO.

...

You look awfully relieved, after all!

NOW DON'T TELL ME... DID YOU THINK I WAS CRYING?

Hee hee...

IT'S THE OPPOSITE. I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.

SO, WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT WITH HIS TEACHER?

TAT

TOK

AREN'T YOU TIRED? THIS IS GONNA TAKE A WHILE.

I'VE GOT TIME.

ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVE TIME TO TALK RIGHT NOW?

TOTALLY!

...IF WE COULD TALK ON THE PHONE A BIT BEFORE HEADING TO BED.

I MEAN, I WAS THE ONE WHO ASKED...

YOU KNOW, I WAS STUDYING ALL DAY YESTERDAY, SO WHEN I WANTED TO CALL IT A NIGHT...

MY BRAIN WAS STILL WORKING AT FULL SPEED, SO I WASN'T SLEEPY AT ALL!

Am I not taking up her precious time?

THAT MIGHT BE TRUE, BUT...

IF IT DOESN'T GET IN THE WAY OF YOUR STUDIES, THEN I'LL MAKE TIME WHEN-EVER!

REALLY?! YAY!

AND... I WAS WONDERING...

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EVERY DAY, BUT IF WE FIND THE TIME HERE AND THERE... COULD WE TALK LIKE THIS? MAYBE? JUST KIDDING!

Ha ha ha...

THAT'S WHY, WHEN YOU TEXTED ME... I WAS ACTUALLY REALLY HAPPY.

I FIGURED THAT TALKING WITH YOU BEFORE HEADING TO BED...

...WOULD HELP ME SLEEP LIKE A BABY.

lee

HOWEVER SMALL AND INSIGNIFI-CANT IT MAY BE...

SEE? IT'S WORKING JUST FINE.

YOU SOUND... PRETTY SLEEPY ALREADY.

...I WANT TO OFFER HER A PLACE WHERE SHE CAN REST EASY...

AFTER WORKING SO HARD DAY AFTER DAY.

Mhm... Maybe 14-15 hours?

Hours, yeah!

Four..?! Wait, for real? Hours? Not minutes..?

How long are you studying each day?

YOU KNOW... WHEN I MANAGE TO GET ACCEPTED INTO MY TOP CHOICE OF SCHOOL, I'D LOVE TO EAT ANOTHER CAKE OF YOURS...!

JUST THAT? I'LL MAKE ONE FOR YOU, NO PROBLEM!

SHE SOUNDS SLEEPY...

IF POSSI-BLE...

I WANT TO SEE ALL THE POSSIBLE CHOICES I HAVE RIGHT NOW.

I GUESS...

I'LL HAVE TO GET TO IT MYSELF..

Haha!

WHY IS THAT?

I'D LIKE TO WATCH YOU... WHILE YOU MAKE IT FOR ME...

AND THEN...

WE WERE ALL BUSY WITH WORK, RIGHT? AND IT MUST HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY HARD ON YOU...

BUT WHEN I LOOKED OVER AT YOU...

?

I CAN'T FORGET THE TIME... I HELPED AT YOUR FAMILY'S BAKERY FOR CHRIST-MAS.

...YOU WERE TRULY HAPPY.

IT SEEMED LIKE...

...

...SEE YOU... LIKE THAT... ONE MORE TIME...

AND I WANT TO...

SHE FELL ASLEEP, HUH?

zzzzzz

She must have been really exhausted

KAO-RUKO-SAN?

zzz...

...zzz...

GOOD NIGHT...

KAORUKO-SAN.

...

IT SEEMED LIKE...

...YOU WERE TRULY HAPPY.

AT LEAST RIGHT NOW...

SOMETHING JUST DOESN'T QUITE FEEL... RIGHT? OR VERY CLEAR...

...

WAVE
WAVE
OH, THERE YOU ARE!
OVER HERE!
HEY, SOTARO!
BEEN A HOT MINUTE, HUH?

Chapter 145: Rintaro's Path

SOMEONE LOOKS HAPPY.

SHE'S LIKE AN OPEN BOOK SOMETIMES.

Doesn't hurt once in a while, right?

Keeping your hair down today?

WAIT, MOM SAID THAT?

...

I WAS WONDERING WHY SHE'D SUDDENLY SUGGEST WE EAT OUT SOMEWHERE...

BUT THAT MAKES SENSE NOW.

YEAH.

THE STORE'S CLOSED TODAY, AFTER ALL.

IT WOULDN'T BE HEALTHY FOR HIM TO JUST MULL OVER IT ALL DAY EVERY DAY.

WHY DON'T WE LET HIM TAKE HIS MIND OFF THINGS FOR JUST A LITTLE?

RINTARO'S STRUGGLING A BIT WITH HIS DECISION, RIGHT?

ANY-WAY...

RIGHT... I SUPPOSE SO.

!

AND I BET SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

I THINK THAT'S THE RIGHT MENTALITY FOR THIS SORT OF THING.

YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE THIS CHOICE WHILE NOT LEAVING BEHIND ANY REGRETS, RIGHT?

...

...YOU WERE TRULY HAPPY

IT SEEMED LIKE...

BUT WHEN I LOOKED OVER AT YOU...

WE WERE ALL BUSY WITH WORK, RIGHT? AND IT MUST HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY HARD ON YOU...

LET'S GO AND HAVE A FEAST TODAY!

!

ひょっ

PEEK!

SORRY! I'M READY NOW!

THEY WERE ACTUALLY REALLY ADAMANT I LEAVE EARLY AND GET SOME REST.

I'M KNOWN TO BE THE GUY WHO LEAVES LAST, RIGHT?

OH, NO WORRIES! I ASKED WITHOUT EXPECTING MUCH, BUT THEY LET ME LEAVE EARLY.

HOW ABOUT YOUR WORK? DIDN'T YOU HAVE A SHIFT TODAY?

THEY JUST SAID I'D HAVE TO WORK A BIT LONGER ANOTHER DAY, SO IT'S NO PROBLEM.

OH, IT'S FINE!

SORRY FOR THE SHORT NOTICE! I WAS A BIT WORRIED SINCE I ONLY ASKED YOU THREE DAYS AGO.

THAT'S GOOD...

CAN YOU GRAB MINE?

OH! THERE IT IS.

TRA LA LA

ALL MY COWORKERS ARE GREAT PEOPLE, Y'KNOW!

THANKS.

HERE YA GO!

Man, this takes me back!

WE DID FAIRLY OFTEN BACK IN THE DAY.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WE HAD CONVEYOR BELT SUSHI LIKE THIS?

THAT'S ALSO TRUE.

AND IF NOT FOR A CHANCE LIKE THIS, I DOUBT YOU TWO WOULD EVER COME TO THIS KINDA PLACE.

I MEAN, WE DID DECIDE ON IT PRETTY MUCH IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT.

HONESTLY, I'VE SAID THIS BEFORE, BUT...

SEEING DAD ACTUALLY LIVING AND BREATHING OUTSIDE THE KITCHEN IS JUST SO FRIGGIN' SURREAL, IT'S THE FUNNIEST THING EVER.

HA

HA

HA

YOU'RE ACTING LIKE I'M SOME VAMPIRE WHO NEVER LEAVES HIS CASTLE...

RIGHT, RIGHT?!

Delish!

NOW THAT I GET A GOOD LOOK AT YOU... YOUR HAIR'S GROWN PRETTY LONG, DAD.

THE LAST TIME WE SAW EACH OTHER WAS WHEN YOU CAME HOME AT THE END OF LAST YEAR. WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

AND IT WAS THE TIME BEFORE THEN THAT YOU GAVE HIM HIS LAST HAIR CUT, WASN'T IT?

WELL, YOU TRIED TO, AT LEAST...

Guh...

I'M NOT GONNA MESS UP LIKE THAT AGAIN, I'LL HAVE YOU KNOW!

HMPH

NO WAY I'M GOING TO LET THIS WEIGH ME DOWN FOREVER!

MAN, THIS FISH IS SO GOOD!

...Mhm!

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ME! ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE ALREADY SET, RINTARO?

...

I MEAN, THIS IS YOUR LAST SUMMER BREAK IN HIGH SCHOOL, RIGHT? YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF DECIDING WHAT YOU WANNA DO, YEAH?

HUH...?

I JUST WANTED US TO RELAX A BIT AND FORGET ABOUT ALL THIS COMPLICATED STUFF... I HOPE THIS ISN'T GOING TO PUT MORE STRESS ON HIM...

CRAP, I NEVER TOLD HIM ABOUT RINTARO BEING UNSURE IN REGARDS TO HIS FUTURE...!

ACTUAL-LY...

...

I DO PLAN ON BECOMING... A PÂTISSIER IN THE FUTURE.

MEANS YOU'LL BE GOING TO A SPECIALIZED SCHOOL?

OH, YEAH? SOUNDS DOPE!

!

MOM...

DAD...

I DON'T WANT TO ATTEND A CULINARY ARTS SCHOOL AFTER I GRADUATE.

I WANT TO START WORKING IMMEDIATELY INSTEAD.

...

...I'D LIKE TO START WORKING IMMEDIATELY AT A PÂTI-SSERIE.

I HAVEN'T FOUND A GOOD SPOT JUST YET, BUT...

I THINK THAT'S BE-CAUSE...

WHY DIDN'T GOING TO A SPECIALIZED SCHOOL FEEL RIGHT TO ME?

ALL THIS TIME I THOUGHT ABOUT IT...

...TO SEE CUSTOMERS IN FRONT OF MY EYES.

...I WOULDN'T BE ABLE...

AND I WAS HAVING FUN TALKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE IN LOVE WITH THE SAME PROFESSION.

AFTER ALL, I COULD SPEND ALL THIS TIME LEARNING ABOUT SOMETHING I LOVE...

CHECKING OUT HOW STUDYING THE CRAFT WOULD WORK...WAS INTERESTING, TOO.

...AS FAST AS I CAN.

I WANT TO GET AS SKILLED AS POSSIBLE...

BUT...

I THINK THAT MIGHT BE MY BEST BET.

...GOING TO A PLACE THAT ISN'T ALL SUNSHINE AND RAINBOWS... SOMEWHERE I WOULD TASTE ALL THE FUN BUT ALSO THE PAIN AND THE FRUSTRATION...

AND TO ACHIEVE THAT...

...!

...I CAN SEE PEOPLE BUYING AND EATING THE CAKES I MAKE.

THAT'S WHY... I WANT TO BE SOMEWHERE...

...AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAKING IT WORTH THEIR MONEY.

KNOWING THAT WHAT I MAKE WILL BE BOUGHT BY THEM.

I WANT TO FEEL THE PRESSURE AND TENSION...

...WILL PROBABLY ALLOW ME TO GROW THE MOST.

BECAUSE THE WAY I SEE IT, A PLACE LIKE THAT...

BUT THIS QUALITY IS ON THE LEVEL OF A PRO, I BET!

I WAS SHOCKED ENOUGH WHEN I HEARD ABOUT IT

WHEN I SAW THEM GLEEFULLY EATING MY CAKE LIKE THAT

BUT THEN.

ENJOY THE CAKE, OKAY?

...BECAUSE THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMEONE ENJOYING WHAT I MADE.

AND I STARTED FEELING THIS WAY...

...AND WORKING WITH EVERY-ONE AT THE PÂTISSERIE.

BECAUSE I WAS BORN INTO THIS FAMILY...

AND I CAN FEEL THIS WAY...

I KNOW I'M BEING PRETTY SELFISH HERE...
TRA LA LA LA LA
...BUT THIS IS WHAT I—
LA LA LA LA LA A A A A
...AH.
FWOO
OSH
TOK
HUH? I DIDN'T ORDER THIS...
WHAT HORRIBLE TIMING...
WHOOPS! THAT'S THE ONE I ORDERED A LITTLE AGO.
HUH?
EAT UP.
MIGHT BE WHAT I ORDERED, BUT...
EAT UP, YEAH?
WHY...?

...YOU'RE SO DAMN AMAZING, DUDE!

BE-CAUSE...

WHA...?

!

RINTARO.

YES...?

FLINCH

THEN...

...?

HUH? UH, SURE DO, BUT...

DO YOU HAVE SCHOOL DAYS LEFT THIS SUMMER BREAK?

THAT YOU MADE THE DECISION TO LOOK FOR A JOB RIGHT AWAY.

...YOU SHOULD TELL YOUR HOMEROOM TEACHER, RIGHT?

...W-WAIT, SO YOU'RE OKAY WITH IT...?

CHOMP

DOING IT THIS WAY WOULD WORK BETTER FOR YOU, RIGHT?

...HAS THEIR OWN STRENGTHS AND TALENTS.

!

EVERY PERSON...

...

...HAS TO BE FULFILLING TO THE PERSON, OR IT'LL ALL BE WASTED EFFORT.

AND ALLOWING THEM TO GROW FULLY...

BUT THE WAY I SEE IT, BRINGING THEM TO LIFE...

...AND SEEING THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE...

SO, HEARING ABOUT YOUR DECISION...

...WHILE BUILDING A MINDSET THAT CAN SUPPORT THEM AND BRING OUT THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

YOU'RE MAKING SURE NOT TO WASTE YOUR STRENGTHS AND TALENTS...

...CONVINCED ME.

THAT'S WHY I THINK...

YOU SHOULD JUST DO WHAT YOU CONSIDER THE RIGHT THING.

I'M SURE YOU'LL DO JUST FINE.

THANK YOU!

NOW I FEEL LIKE I'VE GOTTEN LEFT BEHIND!

I GOTTA RAMP UP MY GAME, TOO!

IS IT MY BIRTHDAY OR SOME-THING...?

HERE! ORDER AS MUCH AS YOU WANT!

HE'S GOTTEN SO STRONG...

WHAT DID KAO-CHAN HAVE TO SAY ABOUT HER B-DAY PRESENT?

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

YOU CAN DROP IT ANYTIME, Y'KNOW...

YEAH? NOW THAT'S WHAT I LOVE TO HEAR. GLAD I COULD HELP YOU OUT IN YOUR TIME OF NEED, LITTLE BRO!

SHE WAS HAPPY, YEAH...

HUH? UHH...

PLING

I mean, I am thankful and all...

I REALLY WISH HE'D STOP GOING ON AND ON ABOUT THAT. THIS IS JUST SO EMBARRASSING...

ARE THESE... BATH BOMBS?!

...THAT GROUP NAME'S PRETTY DEPRESSING, Y'KNOW?

And in the group chat, too...

...NOPE, SEEMS TO BE YORITA.

No Failing Grades Kings (4)

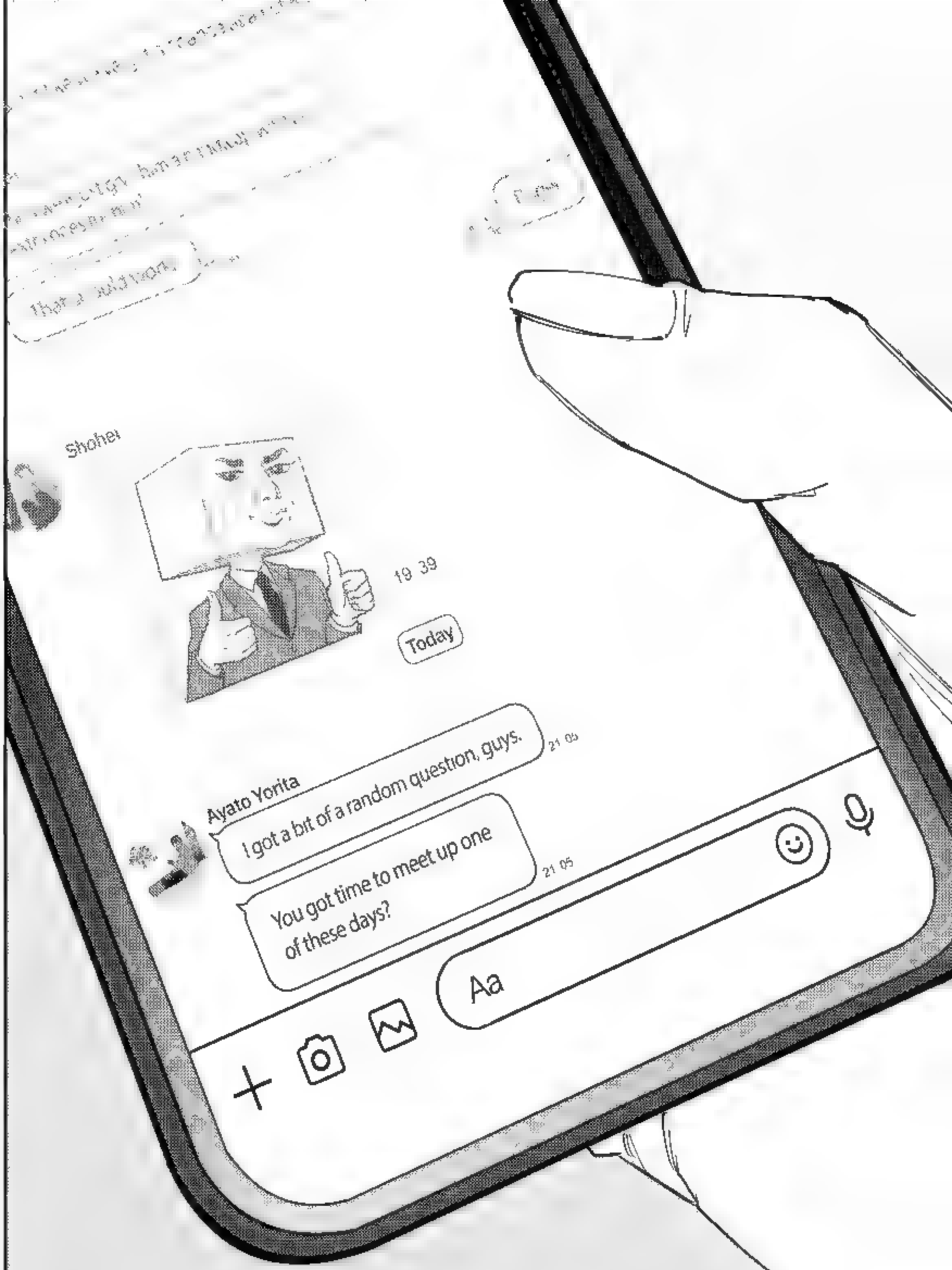
I got a bit of a random question, guys.

Kaoru

SOMEBODY TEXT YOU? COULD IT BE KAO-CHAN?!

...

OH? WHO COULD IT BE...



Chapter 146: Unwinding

SHINE

"

I KNOW HE JUST GOT STARTED...

AND IN THIS HEAT? DAMN.

YOU GO, AYATO!

...BUT HE'S PRACTICALLY FLYING UP THERE...

HUP!

TAM

GLE

AM

NOT AS GREAT AS THAT SMILE...!

THE SCENERY'S GREAT UP HERE!

I THINK HE WAS PROBABLY STRESSED OUT FROM ALL THE STUDYING.

Nghhh!

STREE-

-ETCH

YOU DON'T SEE THAT SORTA SMILE ON HIM OFTEN, RIGHT?

NO WONDER HE'D BE NERVOUS ABOUT THE EXAMS.

WELL...

BEING A POLICE OFFICER'S ALWAYS BEEN HIS DREAM, RIGHT?

Morning.

HE DID PUT ON A SOMEWHAT FORCED SMILE WHEN WE MET UP EARLIER, AFTER ALL.

GRIN!

AND HIM ASKING FOR OUR HELP SURE IS RARE IN ITSELF, NAH? THAT MADE ME PRETTY HAPPY!

JUST MEANS THAT WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE SURE HE'S HAVING A BLAST TODAY!

ALL RIGHT THEN! TIME FOR ME TO JOIN HIM!

YEAH...

THAT'S ALSO TRUE.

THANKS FOR HANGING OUT WITH ME TODAY, YOU GUYS!

WHAT A GREAT GUY...

I'm next!

...BUT I JUST NEEDED THIS BREAK REAL BAD!

I KNOW WE'VE GOT A BUNCH TO WORRY ABOUT...

I GO FOR A JOG PRETTY MUCH EVERY DAY.

AND TO BE FAIR, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M JUST SITTING ALL THE TIME.

Since I also have a physical exam, too

POP-UP USAMI ひょっこり

YUP!

YOU GOT YOUR EXAMS IN SEPTEMBER, RIGHT?

Once I get distracted, I can't quite get back into the groove.

HONESTLY, WITH ALL THIS STUDYING...

IT JUST MAKES ME SYMPATHIZE WITH THE GIRLS.

GOTTA HELP OUT AT THE STORE, Y'KNOW.

IF THERE'S AN EASY ONE I WON'T HAVE TO USE MY HANDS FOR, SURE.

ARE YOU TWO JUST GONNA STAND AROUND OR WHAT? IT'S FUN UP HERE.

SECOND THAT.

DON'T HIDE BEHIND RINTARO! YOU JUST DON'T WANNA GET SWEATY!

SHAME I COULDN'T ASK THE GIRLS, THOUGH. NOT THE RIGHT TIME NOR THE PLACE, I GUESS.

HENCE, I FELT LIKE INVITING Y'ALL.

I BET ONE OF THEM WOULD'VE AGREED IN A HEART-BEAT.

HAZY ぼ

SWAY

BUT SERIOUSLY, THERE'S A LOT OF KIDS AROUND, HUH? SUMMER BREAK MAGIC, I GUESS...

...AH, CRAP!

GOOD LUCK, DUDE.

TAT TAT TAT

I'M GOING ON AHEAD!

HEY, WAIT FOR ME!

GRAB

WATCH OUT!!

INSANE REFLEXES AS ALWAYS...

PHEW

You almost gave me a heart attack.

BE CAREFUL FROM NOW ON, YEAH?

GREAT!

TH-THANK YOU VERY MUCH...!

YOU OKAY?

RIGHT ON TIME...!

Y-YEAH...

SOME-THING WRONG?

CLEAN CATCH THERE, DUDE!

OH, GUYS...

CLENCH

THAT COULD'VE ENDED PRETTY BADLY IF YOU HADN'T CAUGHT THE KID IN TIME, HUH?

...

...I BETTER FOCUS ON MY EXAMS AGAIN. EVEN MORE THAN BEFORE.

ONCE I'VE HAD MY FILL OF FUN TODAY...

IT'S JUST...

BECAUSE, WHENEVER I SEE LITTLE CHILDREN LIKE HIM, I THINK TO MYSELF.

...IS TO HELP OTHERS, AFTER ALL.

I BECAME A POLICE OFFICER...

THE REA-SON...

...U CAN ...WAYS ...Y ON ...S TO YOU.

IN THE END, YOU'RE STILL JUST A CHILD.

...AND MAKE THEM FEEL SAFE.

...WHO CAN HELP KIDS WHEN THEY'RE IN TROUBLE...

I WANT TO BECOME THAT SORT OF POLICE OFFICER...

THAT KIND OF ADULT...

BASICALLY, I'M JUST EVEN MORE FIRED UP NOW, IS ALL!

AND WHEN YOU NEED A BREAK FROM IT ALL, WE'LL BE THERE FOR YA IN A FLASH!

CLENCH

THANKS GUYS.

I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL FOR THE EXAMS.

...

LET'S GO, MY DEAR SAKU-CHAN!

C'MON, DON'T BE SUCH A WIMP AND SHOW US HOW IT'S DONE!

NO WAY IN HELL! LET GO OF ME!

NOT IN A MILLION YEARS! I DON'T WANNA END UP DRENCHED!

Hey, hey, hey...

WHY'D YOU THINK WE ALL BROUGHT SOME EXTRA CHANGE OF CLOTHES WITH US?

AND THOSE ARE WAITING SAFE AND SOUND FOR YOU BACK AT THE LOCKERS!

I HATE THE FEELING OF CLOTHES STICKING TO MY SKIN!

SHUT UP! BOTH OF YOU!

Right, right!

I GUESS YOU DO HAVE A CUTE SIDE TO YA, DARLING!

USA-MI...!

YOU KNOW, YOU LOVE TO COMPLAIN LIKE THIS, BUT YOU ALWAYS END UP HAVING A BLAST WITH THE REST OF US, RIGHT?

YORITA, YOU...

C'MON, YOU TWO DON'T HAVE TO STATE THE OBVIOUS...

AND SAYING THAT MAKES YOU EFFECTIVELY WORSE THAN US.

YOU JUST DEALT THE FINISHING BLOW TO THIS POOR GUY.

...!

OOOH! LOOK AT HIM GO! HE TAKES HIS FIRST STEP *FUELED* BY ANGER!

STOMP

SPLASH

AND HE'S BACK!

...

DAMN. HE ACTUALLY DID IT!

SPLASH

WOOOOW!

SPLASH

STEP UP, AYATO.

C'MON, DON'T BE SHY NOW.

I MEAN, YOU DID KINDA START THE BAND-WAGON...

MEZ!

FWIP

SEEMS LIKE I DON'T NEED TO CHANGE AFTER ALL, HUH?

WELL, GOOD LUCK TO THE REST OF Y'ALL.

Dang!

I'M UP NEXT!

Second Runner: Ayato Yorita

Easy-peasy!

HOP

HOP

ううん

BLUNT

Hold my bag for me

I'M GONNA GO TO A JUNIOR COLLEGE AFTER I GRADUATE!

A JUNIOR COLLEGE?!

OH, RIGHT!

I FORGOT TO TELL YOU GUYS, BUT...

I THOUGHT OF BECOMING...

IT'S BECAUSE I JUST REMEMBERED, DUH!

THERE WOULD'VE BEEN A MUCH BETTER TIME AND PLACE TO TELL US!

AND YOU DROP THAT BOMB RIGHT NOW?!

WHY THAT OUT OF THE BLUE?!

A...

PRE...

SCHOOL...

TEA...

BASICALLY, WORKING AT A KINDERGARTEN WITH A BUNCH OF LITTLE ONES!

GLEAM

...CHER!

BUT HOW'D YOU EVEN THINK OF THAT?

WELL, YOU KNOW HOW TO HANDLE YOUNGER KIDS, I BET.

...

A TEACHER?! YOU?!

ALL THE MOMS IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD KEEP TELLING ME THAT I'D MAKE A PRETTY GOOD ONE.

You'd make a great kinder-garten teacher, I bet!

Like a preschool teacher.

TH-THAT'S ALL?

...

I MEAN, I DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS HANGING OUT WITH CHILDREN, Y'KNOW!

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T REALLY HAVE SOME-THING THAT I DESPERATELY WANNA DO...

THAT'S WHY!

IF PEOPLE THINK...

I MIGHT BE A GOOD FIT...

...FOR THAT SORT OF JOB...

I SAY IT'S WORTH TAKING A SHOT!

CLEAR!!

THEN!

TAM

THAT REASONING'S VERY MUCH LIKE YOU, TOO.

...SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.

TUITION FOR UNIVERSITY SOUNDS PRETTY PRICEY, TOO... SO I'D RATHER SAVE MORE MONEY FOR MAI AND SORA IN THE FUTURE.

IF EITHER ONE GETS ME WHERE I'D LIKE TO GO, I SAY THAT WORKS FOR ME!

HONESTLY, I'M NOT REALLY ALL THAT PARTICULAR ABOUT WHERE I GO.

BUT... A JUNIOR COLLEGE, HUH? COULDN'T YOU HAVE GONE TO A TECHNICAL SCHOOL OR SOMETHING?

EVEN THOUGH IT MIGHT BE TOO LATE.

I FELT LIKE FULLY DEDICATING MYSELF TO STUDYING THIS TIME...

THAT SAID...

I REALLY THOUGHT THEY WERE GENUINELY AMAZING.

HANGING OUT WITH THE GIRLS FROM KIKYO...

AND DOING THE STUDY SESSIONS WITH THEM FROM TIME TO TIME...

...AND GETTING THAT SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AFTER GRASPING IT...

UNDERSTANDING SOMETHING YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE FOGGIEST ABOUT BEFORE...

SO, THANKS A BUNCH!

!

I GOT A TASTE FOR IT THANKS TO THE KIKYO GIRLS...

AND YOU, TOO, SAKU!

I DIDN'T... REALLY DO ANYTHING...

YO, CAREFUL!

AT LEAST LET ME GET RID OF MY BAG!

Thanks!

ALL RIGHT, YOU'RE UP LAST, RINTARO!

PUUUSH

PUSH

SEE HOW IT FEELS NOW?

YOU REALLY DROP THAT BOMB ON US OUT OF THE BLUE?!

OH, FOR REAL?

I DECIDED AGAINST GOING TO A CULINARY ARTS SCHOOL. INSTEAD, I'M GONNA START WORKING IMMEDIATELY.

THOUGH, THERE IS SOMETHING I WANTED TO TELL YOU GUYS.

A Mind holding onto my bag?

...RIGHT NOW!

...FOR A JOB...

LOOK-ING...

YUP!

SO YOU WANNA WORK AT A PÂTISSERIE?!

ばしゃーん SPLASH

ばしゃーん SPLASH

ばしゃーん SPLASH

YEAH?!

SO, RIN-TARO!

DOES THAT MEAN...

...

I MADE UP MY MIND AFTER GIVING IT SOME LONG AND PROPER THOUGHT, AND...

...YOU'RE GONNA START WORKING AT THAT BLOND GUY'S PLACE? THE ONE WITH THE PIERCED EARS?!
WHAT?
AH!
UGH!
OOOH?!
OH NO!
WATCH OUT...!
STAGGER

SPLUUUSH
RINTA-ROOO?!
Ha ha ha!
THAT GUY OVER THERE FELL RIGHT INTO THE RIVER!
SQUEEZE
Blegh...
Oh boy...
WELL... IT WAS SPECTA-CULAR, AT LEAST.
SOME OF THE LEAVES FLOATING IN THE WATER... GOT IN MY MOUTH...
SERI-OUSLY?!
SPIT 'EM OUT! C'MON!
HERE, WASH OUT YOUR MOUTH WITH SOME WATER.
THANKS...

SURE DID...

...

AND THERE'S A SHOWER BACK AT THE LOCKER ROOMS, TOO.

And you did bring a change of clothes, right?

WELL, IT'S GONNA DRY IN NO TIME IN THIS WEATHER!

...YOU'RE GONNA START WORKING AT THAT BLOND GUY'S PLACE? THE ONE WITH THE PIERCED EARS?!

...

...

WHAT'S UP?

I WANNA ASK YOU GUYS SOME-THING.

!

SO...

YOU THINK...

I COULD MAKE IT...

...AS A TEACHER?

A HIGH SCHOOL...

...TEACHER. I MEAN.

NATSUSAWA

夏沢

...AND I BARELY GOT PASSING SCORES ON THE SUBJECTS ON THE SECOND DAY, BUT THIS...

I WAS A MESS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE MOCK EXAMS BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED WITH HIDAKA...

OH WELL...

bined Sciences

Estimated Result for Choice of School

C

Ex

nk

NOT LIKE I ACTUALLY WAS AIMING FOR IT ANY-WAY.

...AS A TEACHER?

...I COULD MAKE IT...

YOU THINK...

IT'S WHAT-EVER...

Chapter 147: Natsusawa's Path

ERR...

SURELY, RIGHT?

Yup.

yup.

OF COURSE YOU GUYS WOULD SAY THAT...

What else could I expect from you

DOES THAT MEAN YOU FOUND SOMETHING YOU WANNA DO?! HELL YEAH, CONGRATS!

...!

...

HEH

Class 9-1 Parent-Teacher Meeting Schedule

IT WAS RECOM-MENDED TO ME.

RATHER THAN FINDING IT MYSELF...

...

Saku Natsusawa
write down the names of the schools.
School Name
Faculty/Department/Course
SO, NATSUSAWA...
I ALREADY ASKED YOU DURING OUR PREVIOUS MEETING...
BUT ARE YOU REALLY FINE WITH THIS?
I AM.
I CHOSE UNIVERSITIES THAT I SHOULD BE ACCEPTED TO, AND LISTED THEM IN THE ORDER OF PROXIMITY FROM MY HOUSE.
THIS LINEUP OF SCHOOLS IS NOT SOMETHING YOU RANK BASED ON THAT...!
He'd be Chidori's greatest star if he were to get accepted into any of these...!
FWOOO
AND AS LONG AS IT'S CLOSE, I DON'T PARTICULARLY CARE ABOUT THE FACULTY OR...

GUESS I GOT A LECTURE WAITING FOR ME ONCE WE'RE BACK HOME...!

FORGIVE MY STUPID SON, SENSEI. I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS THIS BAD WITH HIM... IT APPEARS I WAS TOO LENIENT WHILE RAISING HIM.

P-PLEASE DON'T SAY THAT, MA'AM!

HE'S ALREADY IMPROVED COMPARED TO BEFORE.

AFTER ALL, DURING OUR PREVIOUS MEETING, HE DIDN'T EVEN CARE ABOUT CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY THAT MATCHED HIS ACADEMIC RECORD!

Ha ha ha!

SAKU...

AND HE'S DIGGING A DEEPER GRAVE FOR ME...!

IT'S LIKE A BLIZZARD DURING THE MID-SUMMER SEASON IN HERE...!

...

THAT SAID, THIS IS SOME-THING...

HE DID SCORE FLAWLESSLY IN THE REGULAR EXAMS...

BUT THIS IS STILL CHIDORI STANDARD WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, SO IT WASN'T SOMETHING TOO SHOCKING FOR ME.

NOT TO MENTION THAT THIS DOESN'T EXACTLY REFLECT HOW HE WOULD STAND ON A NATIONAL LEVEL.

THAT'S WHY...

WHEN I HEARD THOSE WORDS..

I DOUBTED MY EARS AT FIRST.

I'D LIKE TO TAKE THE MOCK EXAMS FOR T-UNIVERSITY...

SO COULD I LEAVE EARLY ON THAT SPECIFIC DAY?

Combined

mated Result
hoice of School

C

BUT TO BE HONEST

GRANTED, THE RESULTS WEREN'T AS GOOD AS HE'D HOPED FOR...

IT TOOK ME A SECOND TO GET A GRIP AGAIN, TOO.

...SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

THE FACT THAT HE GOT A RESULT LIKE THIS WITHOUT EVER PUTTING MUCH EFFORT INTO HIS STUDIES...

She did just say so, after all...

WAS IT REALLY JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE SO LENIENT?

HIS PARENTS AGREED TO THAT DECISION?

AND HOW COME...

WHY DID SOMEONE LIKE HIM COME TO CHIDORI?

AND HE DID MAKE HIS CHOICE OF HIGH SCHOOL AFTER GIVING IT SOME PROPER THOUGHT...

WHICH IS WHY I'VE BEEN LETTING HIM MAKE HIS OWN DECISIONS, BUT...

NATSUSAWA'S MOTHER

WHENEVER I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, HE WOULD SAY THAT HE IS "PROPERLY THINKING ABOUT IT."

...

...

...

...

IT APPEARS...

FLINCH

I WILL NEED TO HAVE A PROPER DISCUSSION WITH HIM FIRST.

...NOR AM I PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN ANYTHING.

I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT I WANT TO DO...

...HAVE ANY WAY OF CHOOSING WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW.

SO I DON'T REALLY...

TO BE FAIR, THAT IS WHAT I TOLD YOU IN OUR PERSONAL MEETING BEFORE, AND LOOKING AT YOUR CHOICES, YOU CLEARLY TOOK THAT TO HEART.

WELL... IF YOU DO NOT HAVE AN ANSWER RIGHT NOW, THAT'S ALL THE MORE REASON TO AIM FOR A PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITY.

BECAUSE IT'LL LEAVE YOU WITH EVEN MORE OPTIONS IN THE FUTURE ONCE YOU ACTUALLY HAVE A GOAL IN MIND.

...

...

THAT SAID, NOT HAVING THE FOGGIEST ABOUT WHERE TO GO IS ROUGH.

Believe me, I get that.

...

WHAT IS IT...?

YOU KNOW...

I'VE HAD THIS IDEA FOR A WHILE NOW.

I THINK...

YOU'D DO GREAT ON A JOB...

...WHERE YOU TEACH OTHERS.

I THINK YOU'D ABSOLUTELY NAIL IT.

AT A CRAM SCHOOL... OR EVEN A TEACHER LIKE MYSELF, Y'KNOW.

YOU'RE SAYING HE HAS A TALENT FOR IT?

CORRECT.

I OFTEN SEE HIM TEACHING HIS CLASSMATES...

AND THEY ALL SAY HOW EASY IT IS TO FOLLOW HIS EXPLANATIONS.

SOME OF THEM WERE... WELL, A LITTLE TOO CLOSE TO FAILING THEIR EXAMS FOR MY TASTE.

Then again, it's no rarity at this school.

BUT BECAUSE NATSUSAWA-KUN WOULD HELP THEM OUT RIGHT BEFORE THE PERIODIC EXAMS...

TWO IN PARTICULAR MANAGED TO AVOID GETTING ANY FAILING GRADES SINCE.

Ha ha ha!

Two in particular...

Yeah, not hard to guess who.

...

BUT... ME, OF ALL PEOPLE?

TO TEACH OTHERS... LIKE A TEACHER...

SAY... DO YOU DISLIKE TEACHING OTHERS?

HUH? UM, NO...

NOT ANYMORE, AT LEAST.

I DID BEFORE, THOUGH.

YEAH?

THEN THAT MEANS...

YOU'RE THE SAME AS ME.

BECAUSE IF YOU REALLY HATED IT...

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED OUT THE OTHER GUYS ALL THIS TIME, RIGHT?

...HOW I SEE THINGS IN THIS MATTER.

WELL...

THIS IS JUST...

TSUKA-CHAN'S ABSOLUTELY GOT A POINT THERE!

AGREED!

KNOWING TSUKADA-SENSEI, HE PROBABLY SUGGESTED IT AS JUST ONE OF THE OPTIONS TO CONSIDER, RIGHT?

I'D GUESS SO, YEAH...

YOU MANAGED TO SAVE US FROM THE HELL THAT IS SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS ALL THIS TIME! THANKS TO YOU TEACHING US, SAKU!

We're not getting any failing grades any more!

WAP

WAP

...!

IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM GOING FOR IT?

...

HUH? WHAT'S THAT MEAN?

I'VE EXPERIENCED IT MYSELF, SO I CAN TELL.

FWIP

AND THERE IT IS. YOUR "SOMETHING STILL SEEMS OFF" RADAR.

AND? IS THAT TRUE, SAKU?

I...

IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I NEED MORE THAN ANYTHING.

I JUST DON'T WANT TO RUSH RUINING...

THE SENSATION IN MY FINGERTIPS.

WITH MY VERY OWN EYES.

I'VE SEEN HIM PUT IN SO MUCH EFFORT

I ACTUALLY WANT TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.

I SAY IT'S WORTH TAKING A SHOT!

I JUST DON'T HAVE ANY EXPERI-ENCE...

...WORK-ING REALLY HARD TOWARD SOME-THING.

MEANWHILE, I'VE NEVER WORKED HARD

TOWARD ANYTHING.

I JUST RAN AWAY.

IN FACT, IT'S THE OPPO-SITE.

I DON'T WANT TO SOUND LIKE AN ARROGANT ASSHAT...

BUT I NEVER REALLY STRUGGLED TO KEEP UP WITH THE STUFF AT SCHOOL, EITHER.

I'VE NEVER FACED CHALLENGES HEAD-ON OR PUT IN THE EFFORT TO OVERCOME THEM.

...WHO ARE GIVING IT THEIR ALL, RIGHT?

I MEAN... TEACHING MEANS TO SUPPORT THOSE...

...REALLY HAVE ANY RIGHT TO TAKE UP THE POSITION OF A TEACHER?

BUT DOES SOME-ONE LIKE ME, WHO HASN'T EVER WORKED HARD BEFORE...

...

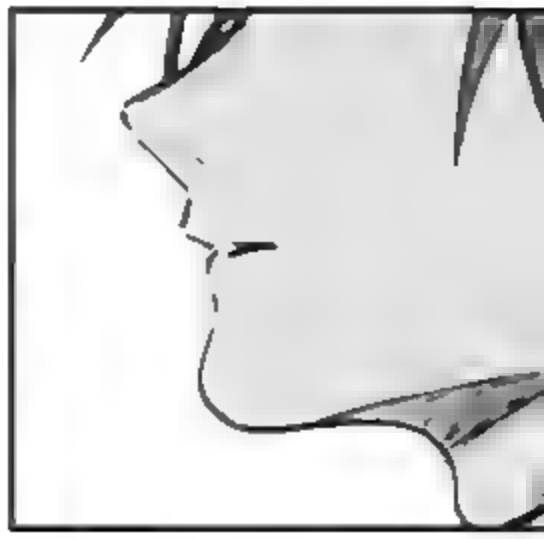
IT CROSSED MY MIND, AND...

WELL...

THAT'S WHAT...

I'LL TRY...

...TO GET INTO T-UNIVER-SITY.



GOOD THING YOU ENDED IT WITH THAT.

Don't scare me like that.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN ...

...!

HAAAAAAAAAAH...

EXHAUSTED

?!

I WOULD'VE PUSHED YOU INTO THE POND RIGHT THEN AND THERE.

BECAUSE YOU REALLY NEEDED TO COOL YOUR HEAD, DUDE.

ANY MORE OF THAT WHINING AND I WOULD'VE HAD TO STRAIGHTEN YOU OUT WITH A BIT OF FORCE.

OH, PLEASE! I WOULDN'T TAKE IT THAT FAR WITH A FRIEND!

...SO, I JUST BARELY AVOIDED A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL?

Though I guess that reaction is warranted this time, considering all the rambling I threw at you...

G- GOOD THING I DIDN'T KEEP GOING THEN...!

AND I WOULD'VE MADE SURE THAT YOU WOULDN'T HAVE A CHANGE OF CLOTHES TO SAVE YOU AFTER.

...TRY TO RUN AWAY AGAIN LIKE THAT...

THAT SAID... IF I EVER...

AS LONG AS I DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID IN A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS.

OR JUST DO WHATEVER IS NECESSARY.

I WANT YOU TO PUNCH ME, THROW ME RIGHT INTO THE POND...

SHEESH, DUDE.

DO YOU EVEN HAVE TO ASK?

SORRY FOR HAVING TO ASK THIS OF YOU GUYS.

GRAB

!

WE'LL BE ASKING THE SAME THING OF YOU IF PUSH COMES TO SHOVE, DUH!

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR, RIGHT?

YOU'RE RIGHT.

...DOESN'T CHANGE A THING FOR US.

YOU SEE, HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF...

HEY, NATSUSAWA.

YEAH?

NO MATTER WHAT MAY HAPPEN, RIGHT NOW AND IN THE FUTURE...

...YOU'RE ALWAYS GONNA BE A FRIEND WE'RE SO DAMN PROUD OF.

...

What he said, Saku!

...AS THEY COIL AROUND MY HEART.

THEIR ROOTS LAY FAR DEEPER THAN I COULD EVER THINK...

THESE REGRETS I HAVE...

YOU JUST GOTTA WORK HARDER, RIGHT?

I GUESS THEY'RE REALLY SPOILED BY THEIR STUDENTS, HUH?

ALSO, WHAT'S WITH THAT HAIR ANYWAY?

SAKTO ALWAYS TOLD US JUST DYE IT

ALTHOUGH I DON'T GET WHY YOU WOULD.

YOU LOVE STUDYING, AFTER ALL.

...THEY KEEP STICKING TO ME AND WON'T LET GO.

EVEN WITH EVERYONE'S HELP OF UNWRAPPING THEM...

NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY TO TEAR THEM OFF...

...THAT I HAVE TO KEEP ON FIGHTING.

BUT, I REALIZE NOW...

BECAUSE IF I DON'T...

.. I'LL NEVER BECOME THE KIND OF GUY...

THAT THEY SEE ME AS.

I WANT TO BE...

.. SOMEONE THEY CAN BE PROUD OF.

PLUS...

THEY TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH.

YOU NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU?

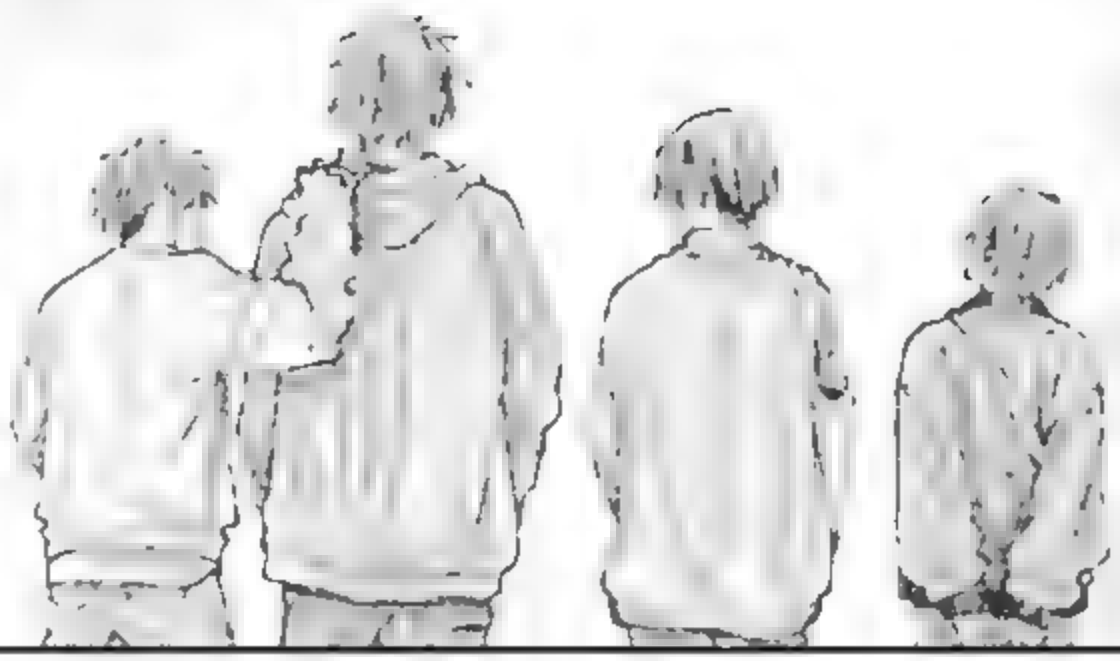
YOU'RE JUST...

...THE COOLEST BUNCH AROUND.

FROM NOW ON AND ALWAYS.

...WITH YOU ALL.

AND I WANT TO KEEPING WALKING SIDE BY SIDE...



Chat

Q Search

Kaoruko Waguri

Today marks our first

No Failing Gra

Shohei sent a st

MOR NING!

7 20

Today marks our first anniversary as a couple, huh?
Thank you for always being there for me and making me smile when I need it, Rintaro-kun!
I'm really looking forward to the festival, so I'll study as much as I can!

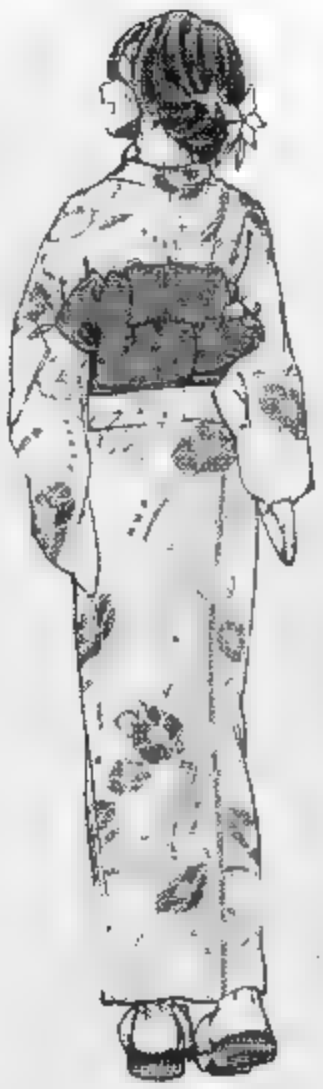
7 20

WE WENT TO THAT FESTIVAL TOGETHER.

LAST YEAR ON THIS DAY...

THIS MEANS THAT WE'VE BEEN DATING A WHOLE YEAR...

ALREADY, HUH?



Chapter 148: First Anniversary

Gamo Cram School

HOLD ON A SECOND, I HAVE TO RESPOND TO THIS MESSAGE!

GO AHEAD...

TOK TOK TOK

SHE COULDN'T MAKE IT ANY MORE OBVIOUS EVEN IF SHE TRIED...

ALL RIGHT!

SHUP

WERE YOU CHATTING WITH TSUMUGI-KUN?

THE FLOWERS FLOATING IN THE AIR AROUND YOU WERE A DEAD GIVEAWAY.

O-OH, HAHA... I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE IT WAS THAT OBVIOUS...

HUH?! H-HOW DID YOU KNOW?!

AND HE JUST RESPONDED A FEW MINUTES AGO.

THAT'S RIGHT! I SENT HIM A MESSAGE FIRST THING THIS MORNING!

You mentioned it a little while ago.

TODAY'S YOUR FIRST ANNIVERSARY, RIGHT?

GLEAM

Tee hee hee!

WE AGREED TO TALK ON THE PHONE TONIGHT!

And he was the one asking, too!

IT'S LIKE A FIELD OF FLOWERS AT THIS POINT...

Aaaah!

ONE YEAR ALREADY... TIME SURE FLIES.

ALL RIGHT! TIME TO EAT AND GET PLENTY OF ENERGY FOR OUR AFTERNOON CLASSES!

SMOKES

KAORU-KO...?

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE THIS EARLY...?

I ACTUALLY HAVE WORK RIGHT AFTER THIS, BUT...

SORRY FOR SUDDENLY SHOWING UP LIKE THIS, SUBARU...

I JUST HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING BEFORE THAT.

YOU SEE... RINTARO-KUN AND I WENT TO THE SUMMER FESTIVAL TOGETHER YESTERDAY.

AND...

...

...!

WE STARTED...

...DATING!

I...I...

I TALKED WITH RINTARO-KUN ON THE PHONE JUST NOW.

AND HE SAID...

...THAT IT WASN'T A DREAM AFTER ALL!

...

...YEAH.

I LIKE HIM.

I STILL WANT TO SEE RINTARO-KUN.

A VERY KIND PERSON...

...!

SO...IT WORKED OUT, YEAH?

OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING.

A-AND...I MEAN...THAT'S ALL I HAD TO TELL YOU, BUT IT'S JUST...

...KAO-RUKO.

I'M HAPPY FOR YOU...

What do I do?! What if this is actually a dream?!

Ha ha ha! I think you don't have to worry about that

...!

?

HEE HEE...

YEAH!

THAT'S TRUE. I DO HOPE WE END UP AT THE SAME VENUE.

WE SHOULD BE GETTING A NOTICE OF WHERE IT'S BEING HELD, RIGHT?

ANYWAY, THE NATIONAL MOCK EXAMS ARE STARTING SOON, HUH?

OH... MY BAD. HAHA.

SPEAKING OF, I NEED YOUR INPUT ON SOMETHING, SUBARU.

I FEEL LIKE I KNOW YOUR SCHEDULE BETTER THAN MY OWN AT THIS POINT.

YOU KEEP GUSHING ABOUT THE FESTIVAL ALL THE TIME, AFTER ALL.

IT'LL FINALLY BE TIME FOR THE SUMMER FESTIVAL!

Tee hee...

ONCE THE NATIONAL AND THE MEDICAL SCIENCES MOCK EXAMS ARE OVER...

INCRE-DIBLE...

DO

STARE

I THINK BOTH OF THEM WOULD LOOK GREAT ON YOU.

What do you think?

I WAS WONDERING WHICH HAIR-STYLE TO GO WITH FOR THE FESTIVAL. I'M TORN BETWEEN THESE TWO HERE...

REALLY? THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR!

すん COLD...

ぽわわわ FLUFFY

...BUT ONCE CLASSES START, SHE CAN FOCUS UP AND NOT BE DISTRACTED WHATSOEVER.

RIGHT NOW, SHE LOOKS LIKE SHE'S SURROUNDED BY FLOWERS EVERYWHERE...

...SO CUTE.

Hmmm...

WHEN I SAID THOSE WORDS TO HIM, I

WHAT SORT OF FACE DID I MAKE

BEING SO ADORABLE AS THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT LOVE AND ROMANCE

THOSE EXPRESSIONS THE GIRLS HAD

YEAH, I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE MYSELF LOOKING LIKE THIS.

There's a good chance I just said it normally, after all...

I'm still torn...!

Did you decide on one?

...?

...

Pâtisserie Noisette

HERE I STAND...

...YET AGAIN, HUH?

I'VE COME HERE THREE WHOLE TIMES ALREADY.

EVER SINCE I MET UP WITH THE GUYS THAT ONE TIME...

...YOU'RE GONNA START WORKING AT THAT BLOND GUY'S PLACE? THE ONE WITH THE PIERCED EARS?!

THOSE TWO BACK HOME STARTED TO GO CRAZY, TOO...

I wonder what menu they'll come up with next...! Guess I won't be getting any sleep tonight...

The cakes from that place are really good...!

Motivation 100%

I mean, they are delicious... But does that mean you're tired of ours? C'mon, tell me!

You keep buying cakes from the same place, right?

I'M BASICALLY A REGULAR AT THIS POINT...!

I CAN'T JUST LEAVE WITHOUT BUYING A CAKE...

AND SINCE I KEEP BUYING THE ONES FROM THIS PLACE...

WHEN I DECIDED I'D LIKE TO START WORKING IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRADUATING.

TRUTHFULLY, IT'S NOT LIKE THIS PLACE NEVER CROSSED MY MIND AS AN OPTION...

...

THAT SAID, IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THEY WERE LOOKING FOR NEW EMPLOYEES AT THE TIME...

MY FAMILY JUST SO HAPPENS TO OWN A BAKERY WHERE I'VE BEEN HELPING FOR YEARS NOW.

I DIDN'T GRADUATE FROM A SPECIALIST SCHOOL... NOR DID I WIN BIG AT A COMPETITION.

...AND I DON'T REALLY HAVE OUT-STANDING RESUME EITHER.

...AS THE MAN I'VE ALWAYS ADMIRED...

YET, WANTING TO WORK AT THE SAME PLACE...

...SO I STEPPED ON THE BRAKES TO REALLY THINK IT THROUGH.

IT FELT LIKE I WAS GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF...

I should really come up with a strategy at this point...

THE CAKES HERE ARE REALLY GOOD AND IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO BE ABLE TO HAVE SOME MORE REFERENCES FOR MY OWN WORK, BUT...

AT THIS MOMENT, I'M PRACTICALLY JUST A SHORT-TERM REGULAR CUSTOMER BUYING CAKES AND HEADING HOME STRAIGHT AWAY.

That guy's place!

GRANTED, THE THOUGHT OF IT'S BEEN STUCK IN MY HEAD SINCE USAMI BROUGHT IT UP, WHICH IS WHY I CAME HERE A FEW TIMES ALREADY...

BUT I NEVER ASKED IF THEY WERE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE OR ANYTHING OF THAT SORT, EITHER...

AH, OZAKI-SAN! WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!

I'M SORRY FOR ARRIVING SO LATE. I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO CLOSE UP SOON, TOO...

Work was rather stressful today

OH, THAT'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL! I CAN TOTALLY IMAGINE!

Patisserie

ANYWAY, HERE IS THE BIRTHDAY CAKE YOU ORDERED!

THE CANDLES ARE A LITTLE BONUS FROM US.

The owner added them, see.

OH! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE! BUT THANK YOU.

YOUR SON MUST BE SIX NOW, RIGHT? TIME SURE FLIES!

Ha ha ha!

SHE EVEN REMEMBERS THE AGE OF ONE OF THEIR REGULARS' KID...

THEY ALL ARE AT THAT AGE, NO?

OH, YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN. AND HE'S ALREADY A LITTLE KNOW-IT-ALL...

...TOOK OVER MY THOUGHTS.

ONLY A MOMENT

FOR ME TO BE TRANSPORTED BACK IN TIME TO THAT DAY.

THOSE OF SHINE GEMS

WHEN I CAME HERE WITH KAORUKO-SAN...

NOSTALGIA AND ALL THE CAKES AROUND ME...

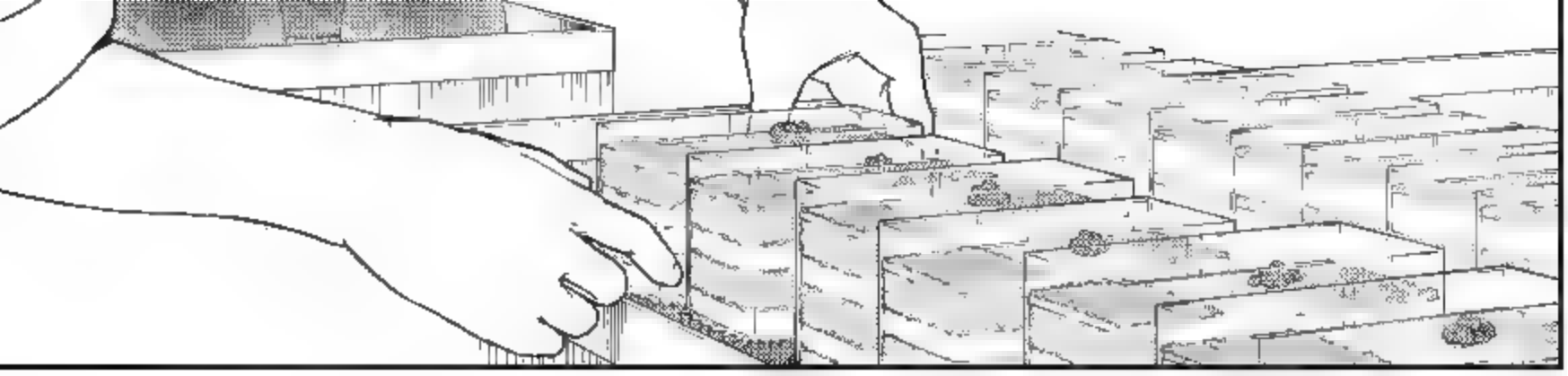
STARE...

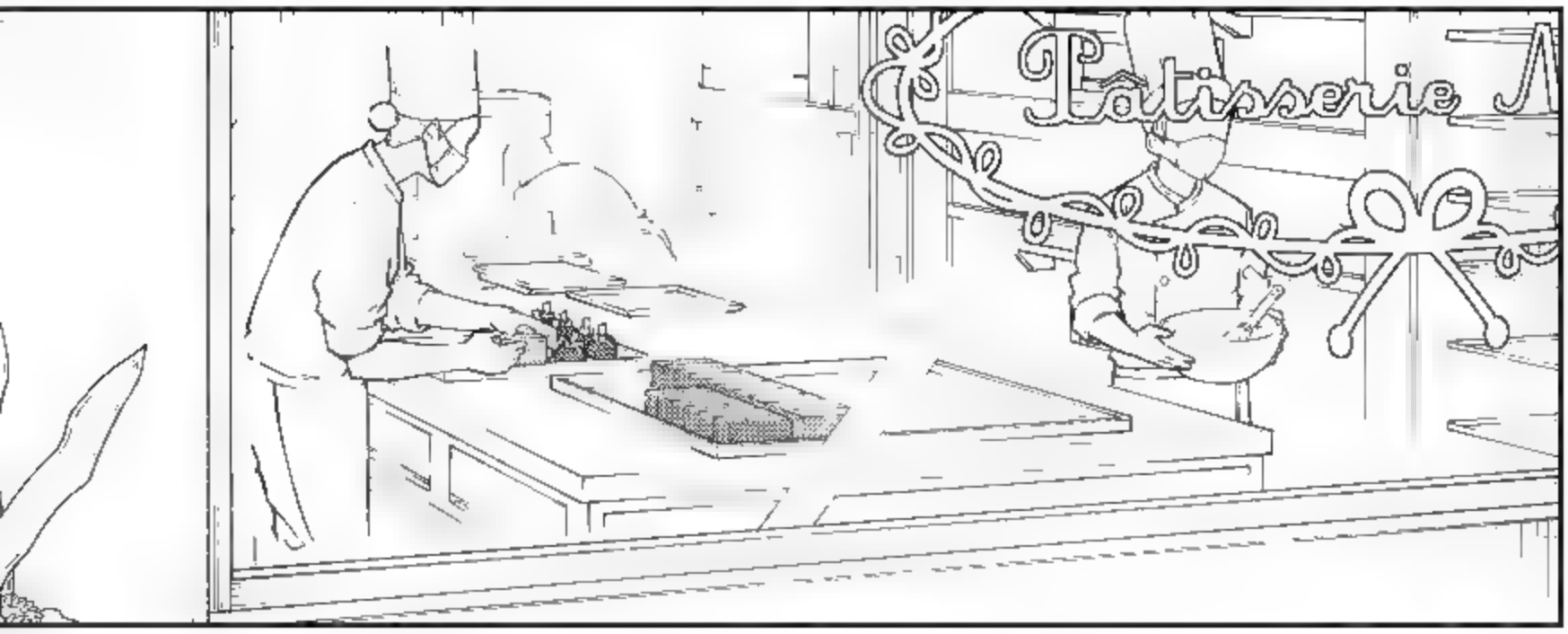
...

Peach Charlotte

Peach flavored mousse wrapped in biscuits

¥450 (Tax incl.)




Patisserie A

O-
OH! AH, SORRY!
LET'S SEE, UM...
HAVE YOU ALREADY DECIDED ON YOUR ORDER, SIR?

WELL, MOST OF THE STUFF IS ALREADY SOLD OUT, SO...
CRAP, I COMPLETELY FORGOT THAT I WAS HERE TO ORDER SOMETHING...!

ERM...
I THINK I'LL TAKE THIS...
OH, THIS ONE WAS DELICIOUS.

!

...MARRON CAKE AND...

WAP

UNDER-STOOD, DEAR CUSTOMER!

HAHA, SORRY ABOUT THAT.

ONE OF THE KITCHEN STAFF TOLD ME YOU WERE HERE.

I came running over to see you.

DU DUMP

DU DUMP

THAT... THAT ALMOST GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK...!

And you do stand out, after all.

I KEEP SPOTTING YOU FROM THE KITCHEN.

YOU'VE BEEN VISITING A LOT THESE DAYS, NO?

...!

...MY FELLOW PÂTISSIER?

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN SINCE THAT TIME...

I'M HAPPY, OF COURSE. DOES THAT MEAN OUR CAKES WON OVER YOUR HEART?

...!

Peach Charlotte

?

WHICH IS WHY I...

YES. THEY ARE... VERY DELICIOUS.

I WANT TO WORK HERE.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.

...?!

F- FORGET I SAID ANYTHING, PLEASE...!

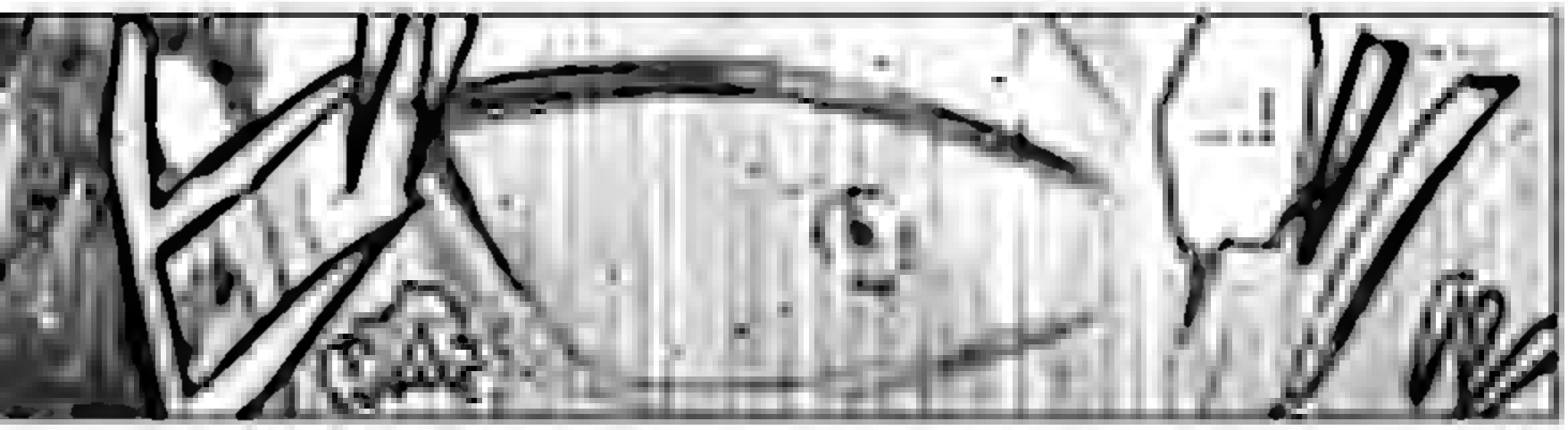
I-I'M SORRY!

WHAT THE HELL AM I THINKING?!

GASP

...AH!

I DON'T SEE.
NO


...!!

THEN COULD YOU WAIT JUST A LITTLE?

WE'RE GOING TO CLOSE UP SHOP SOON OURSELVES.

HUH?!

UHM, YES...

AH...

SAY, DO YOU HAVE TIME AFTER THIS?

GRIN

I'D LOVE TO HAVE A PROPER TALK WITH YOU.

WE COULD HAVE SOME CAKE ALONG WITH IT.

HOW ABOUT IT?

...THAT GAZE.

I KNOW...

BELONGING TO A PRO-FESSIONAL...

THOSE EYES...

...WHO VALUES HIS CRAFT OVER EVERY-THING.

Chapter 149: Job Interview

closed

I'LL GLADLY HAVE SOME.
TH-THANK YOU...
NOW, HAVE A BITE, YEAH?

THAT YOU COULD ONLY FIND HERE IN THIS PLACE.
AND THE FLAVOR IS SOME-THING REFINED...
THE CAKES HERE ARE LIKE RADIATING GEMS..

HOWEVER, RIGHT NOW...

I CAN'T TASTE EVEN A BITE...

SO WITHOUT PUTTING MUCH THOUGHT INTO IT.

I SAID SOMETHING SO RUDE.

I WANT TO WORK HERE

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE

AFTER HE GAVE ME THAT LOOK...

EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN A LITTLE...

MY BODY STILL FEELS STIFF LIKE A ROCK.

WHEN I ASKED TO WORK HERE...

I MUST HAVE CROSSED THE LINE AND CEASED TO BE JUST ANOTHER CUSTOMER.

IF I HAD TO GUESS...

THIS ROSE TEA HERE ACTUALLY CAME AS A RECOMMENDATION FROM OUR STAFF.

THE SCENT IS RATHER CALMING, DON'T YOU THINK?

EVEN WHEN HE'S WORKING WITH EVERYONE ELSE IN THE KITCHEN...

Actually, a little while ago...

HE'S NICE TO ANYBODY...

AND A GENTLE SOUL NO MATTER WHAT.

...IT COMES TO THE FLAVOR OF HIS CAKES...

BUT AS SOON AS...

...THAT ALLOWS ABSOLUTELY NO COMPROMISE.

...HE'S PROBABLY AS STRICT AS THEY COME.

TO CREATE SOMETHING FLAWLESS...

FLINCH

SST

WHY DID YOU...

...START BAKING YOUR OWN CAKES?

KCHAK

NOW THEN... LET'S NOT BEAT AROUND THE BUSH ANY LONGER, YEAH?

ENJOY THE CAKE, OKAY?

YOU GO AND MAKE A CAKE FOR HER?

AH, UHM...

A FRIEND OF MINE'S BIRTHDAY WAS COMING UP, SO I MADE ONE FOR HER...

SINCE LAST YEAR, IT'S BECOME A PART OF MY EVERYDAY LIFE, SO TO SPEAK...

BUT WHILE I HAD NO REGRETS BACK THEN... THERE WERE A LOT OF THINGS I COULD'VE DONE BETTER.

AND THAT PERSON WAS REALLY HAPPY ABOUT IT, TOO. SAYING HOW DELICIOUS IT WAS.

BACK THEN, I GAVE IT ALL I HAD...

HOW DID IT GO?

OH! THAT SOUNDS WONDER-FUL!

COULD I ASK FOR THE NAME OF YOUR FAMILY'S PÂTISSERIE?

OH! THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THINGS!

AND SO, MY FATHER BEGAN TEACHING ME A WHOLE LOT ABOUT IT.

W-WELL... MY FAMILY OWNS A PÂTISSERIE.

Anybody else would've just bought one.

I'M SURPRISED YOU THOUGHT OF MAKING ONE YOURSELF.

...?

...!

WELL, I'LL BE...

IT'S CALLED "PLAIN," AND WE'RE LOCATED IN BENIGAOKA.

I GOTTA SAY...

THAT BOY'S GOT GUTS.

I WENT AHEAD AND TOLD THE CHEF WHEN I SAW HIM EARLIER, TOO.

IT'S EASY TO REMEMBER HIM, ISN'T IT?

ESPECIALLY AS OF LATE.

HE'S VISITED A FEW TIMES ALREADY, RIGHT?

NEVER WOULD'VE IMAGINED THAT HE'D WANNA WORK HERE, THOUGH.

CALLING IT A "TALK" SURE SOUNDS OMINOUS, NO?

OH, ABSO-LUTELY...

I MEAN, IMAGINE MY SURPRISE WHEN OUR CHEF SUDDENLY SAID THAT...

That doesn't really explain much...

Could you handle the clean-up for me?

Once we close up for the day, I'm gonna have a talk with that young man over there.

...TO THOR-OUGHLY MEASURE THE KID.

AND IF I HAD TO GUESS, OUR CHEF'S GONNA USE THIS TALK...

JUST BETWEEN US, THOUGH.

I WAS KINDA ANNOYED TO SEE HIM JUST STROLL IN AND ASK TO WORK HERE.

WELL, I'M NOT GONNA COMPLAIN.

THEN HOW HE FEELS ABOUT OUR CAKES ISN'T RELEVANT ANYMORE.

IF HE REALLY WANTS TO WORK HERE...

BUT THAT'S ONLY THE CASE AS LONG AS HE'S A CUSTOMER.

GRANTED, I'M HAPPY THAT HE'S SUCH A FAN OF OUR CAKES...

THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

CAN HE KEEP UP... OR NOT?

...

NOW THAT MAKES ME HAPPY TO HEAR, YUP!

Y-YES.

COINCIDENTALLY, YOU'VE KNOWN ABOUT OUR FINE ESTABLISHMENT FOR A WHILE, SO IT MADE SENSE FOR YOU TO APPLY HERE, CORRECT?

I SEE... AND THAT'S WHY YOU DECIDED TO LOOK FOR A JOB IMMEDIATELY.

...!

WE RUN A STRICT BUSINESS HERE, YOU SEE?

HOW-EVER...

...

THEN I SHOULD AT LEAST TELL YOU THAT MUCH.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WORK HERE...

I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER THE...

HOW MANY TIMES DID THEY HAVE TO REDO IT UNDER MY SUPER-VISION?

ONE OF OUR STAFF CAME UP WITH THE RECIPE.

HOWEVER, TO MAKE IT AN ACTUAL PRODUCT HERE, I HAD TO RUN A FINAL CHECK.

BUT TAKE THE MARRON CAKE YOU'RE LOOKING AT, FOR EXAMPLE.

MOST OF THE RECIPES FOR THE CAKES HERE COME FROM MY HUMBLE SELF...

NOW, HOW ARE YOU ABLE TO SHOW ME SUCH A FACE AFTER HEARING THAT?

OH?

H-HUH?! AH, UM...

...

...I THINK I WOULD BE **REALLY** THANKFUL FOR THAT.

IF I WAS WORKING HERE, UNDER YOUR GUID-ANCE...

AND YOU'D BE THAT STRICT WITH MY WORK...

...THAT I MADE SOMETHING I CAN BE PROUD OF.

IT REALLY MAKES ME REALIZE...

BUT WHEN I MANAGE TO FINALLY SATISFY HIM...

IT'S... FRUS-TRATING EVERY DAY, SURE...

EVEN WHEN I THINK I NAILED THIS PARTICULAR ONE, HE ALWAYS FINDS A WAY TO PUT ME IN MY PLACE.

MY FATHER IS ALSO... PRETTY STRICT WHEN-EVER HE'S WATCHING OVER MY WORK.

BUT EVEN SO...

CLENCH

SO... I MIGHT NOT EVEN BE ABLE TO FULLY GRASP HOW STRICT AND STRESSFUL IT'S GOING TO BE FOR ME...

BEYOND HELPING AT MY PARENTS' PLACE.

I HAVE NEXT TO NO EXPE-RIENCE...

PLUS, I'M STILL JUST A STUDENT.

I JUST...

...DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP ANYMORE.

I'M SURE YOU'LL DO JUST FINE

ALL THIS KIND-NESS AND DISCONTENT I'VE BEEN GIVEN AND EXPERI-ENCED...

I WANT TO BE SOMEONE WHO CAN FACE IT ALL HEAD-ON.

THAT'S WHY... I DECIDED THAT I'D LIKE TO WORK HERE.

I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE ON AND FORGET ABOUT IT.

THIS SENSE OF DEFEAT I FELT AFTER TRYING YOUR CAKES...

...AND MAKE THE MOST DELICIOUS CAKES.

I'LL BE ABLE TO SURPASS BOTH YOU AND MY FATHER...

SO THAT, ONE DAY...

I WANT TO BECOME THE SORT OF PÂTISSIER...

...WHOSE CAKES CAN HELP BRIGHTEN A CUSTOMER'S DAY, IF EVEN JUST A LITTLE!

HA HA HA HA!

YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WIN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEST! EASY, RIGHT?

WELL, THEN YOUR GOAL IS SIMPLE.

YOU'D LIKE TO SURPASS ME...

...

I WON'T ACCEPT ANYTHING LESS.

NATURALLY, YOU'LL HAVE TO WIN FIRST PLACE, JUST LIKE ME.

YOU SEE, I WON ONE MYSELF WHEN I WAS STILL LIVING BACK HOME.

In France, to be exact.

AN INTERNA-TIONAL... CONTEST?

OF COURSE.

CAN YOU DO IT?

Wonderful.

MY NAME IS LUCAS DURAND.

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I NEVER INTRODUCED MYSELF.

RIN-TARO-KUN IT IS, THEN.

...!

I-I'M RINTARO TSUMUGI!

!

I CAN'T BE THE ONE DECIDING IF YOU GET TO WORK HERE OR NOT.

THAT SAID...

!

I completely lost my cool when he showed up out of nowhere earlier...!

I... I COMPLETELY MESSED UP THE ORDER OF THINGS...!

ASKING TO WORK HERE WITHOUT EVEN INTRODUCING MYSELF FIRST?! SERIOUSLY?!

HOW ABOUT WE DO SOME-THING LIKE THIS?

SO... INSTEAD...

DING

...!

SO YOU'RE GOING TO HELP OUT AT HIS BAKERY?!

OH, AWE-SOME!

IS IT JUST ME...

BUT... UM...

...OR ARE YOU NOT ALL THAT EXCITED ABOUT IT, RINTARO-KUN?

...